

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

April 1, 2019

Randy Baird
USDA Rural Development
1606 Perry Street, Suite D
Yakima, WA 98902-5798

Dear Mr. Baird,

I write in strong support of the Wind River Biomass Utility, LLC's application for a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Energy for America Grant Program (REAP). I support this project as a tool for economic development of a heavily forested county, for forest restoration and wildfire fuels reduction work, and for demonstration of benefits of remote combined-heat-and-power (CHP) in terms of power generation efficiency.

As I understand the project from Wind River Biomass Utility, LLC, the CHP plant would be uniquely situated on a former tree nursery near Federal, State, and private timberlands that remain in need of harvesting, thinning, and forest health remediation. These treatments are currently funded through a variety of programs to maintain forest health and prevent forest fires. The plant would utilize previously discarded forest waste from these treatments to generate electricity and heat, which would be used to dry wood chips to the degree necessary to be used or sold as wood fuel. The plant would provide at least 250 Kilowatts of inexpensive clean energy to the local community during the first phase of development.

According to Wind River Biomass Utility, LLC, engineering and business planning professionals have been involved in the development of the project and a significant portion of the capital assets are on site. In addition to electrical-power generation based on a major renewable resource, the project will build infrastructure and provide resources for other forest products businesses. The Wind River Biomass Utility, LLC plan also includes the sale of heat to agricultural businesses including aquaponics-based greenhouses.

Skamania County, Washington, is in severe need of economic opportunities. Eight-eight percent of land in Skamania County is publically owned forest; another ten percent is private timberland. A REAP grant will show a level of support from the federal government that could inspire other capital investments.

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I gladly support the Wind River Biomass Utility, LLC's application for funding under the Rural Energy for America Grant Program, and I ask for your full and fair consideration of their application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maria" being more prominent than the last name "Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator