



Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas — Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities

The Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) Program, managed by the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED), aims to fund community-driven energy projects that demonstrate clean energy systems, deliver measurable and sustained benefits to people who live in rural or remote areas, and build clean energy knowledge, capacity, and self-reliance throughout rural America. As part of the ERA Program's cooperative agreement funding opportunity, OCED sought applications with a range of different technologies to improve the resilience, reliability, and affordability of energy systems in communities across the country with 10,000 or fewer people. OCED selected 17 projects across 20 states and 30 tribal nations for a total of up to \$366 million in federal funding. Following negotiations, in September 2024, OCED awarded the Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities project with more than \$7.5 million for three facilities at various phases in Burney, Mammoth Lakes, and Mariposa, CA.

Awardee Fact Sheet

Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas:

Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities

Project at a Glance

- » **Total OCED Cost Share:** Up to \$30 million
- » **Initial Phase Total Project Amount:** \$15,269,562*
- » **Initial Phase OCED Award Amount:** \$7,562,555**
- » **Initial Phase Scope of Work:** Construction verification and validation; operations and maintenance for the Hat Creek facility; and planning, design, and permitting for the Mammoth and Mariposa facilities
- » **Initial Phase Timeline:** 18 months
- » **Recipient:** West Biofuels, LLC is a bioenergy systems design and construction firm
- » **Project Location:** Burney, Mammoth Lakes, and Mariposa, CA
- » **Start Date:** October 2024

*Represents the total project cost for the Initial Phase.

**Represents OCED's cost share for the Initial Phase. Additional funding for this project is subject to future award negotiations at the end of each project phase.

About This Project

West Biofuels, LLC plans to deploy three community-scale forest biomass-to-energy power plants in Burney, Mammoth Lakes, and Mariposa, CA. Located in the rural and remote Sierra Nevada mountains, residents in these communities face wildfires and frequent power outages due to extreme weather. The plants would transform forest waste or agricultural (plant) biomass waste into 100% renewable electricity and biochar for soil amendment.

Each plant would produce 3 MW of reliable, renewable energy, utilizing 28,000-35,000 tons of dry forest waste annually from sustainable forest management programs. Once fully operational, the project is expected to sequester 11,939 tons of carbon equivalent emissions per year, while

reducing the threat of wildfires in these three communities. This demonstration could help encourage more communities to repurpose forest biomass from wildfire management activities to provide low-carbon, resilient energy.

In September 2024, OCED awarded this project more than \$7.5 million to begin work at these three facilities. For the Hat Creek facility located in Burney, CA, this award would support construction verification and validation, as well as operations, maintenance, and engagement activities. For the Mammoth and Mariposa facilities, which have not yet been constructed, this funding would support planning, design, and permitting activities.

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Project Site

The project facilities would be located in rural communities throughout California's Sierra Nevada mountains; at the existing Hat Creek facility in Burney, and not yet constructed facilities in Mammoth Lakes and Mariposa, CA.

Community Benefits Commitments

Community benefits commitments are a key component of the Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities project. The commitments are informed and developed—in consultation with local communities—to mitigate potential negative impacts of this project and maximize local community benefits. The Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities project aims to implement these commitments through:

- **Creating 15 new, permanent, good-paying jobs per site**, and prioritizing recruitment from local communities and underrepresented groups.
- **Holding town halls, public presentations, and one-on-one meetings** with civic groups and community-based organizations to inform community members of project developments and seek input on project decisions.
- **Collaborating with local governments, educational institutions, and community-based organizations** to support community and labor engagement, including partnering with the Mariposa County Resource Conservation District, Mariposa Biomass Project, and Whitebark Institute to document and present on forest resilience benefits from the project.
- **Prioritizing outreach to underrepresented businesses, suppliers, and contractors** to support opportunities for economic development.

More details on the Community Scale Rural Bioenergy Facilities project's community benefits commitments can be found in the [Community Benefits Commitments Fact Sheet](#).



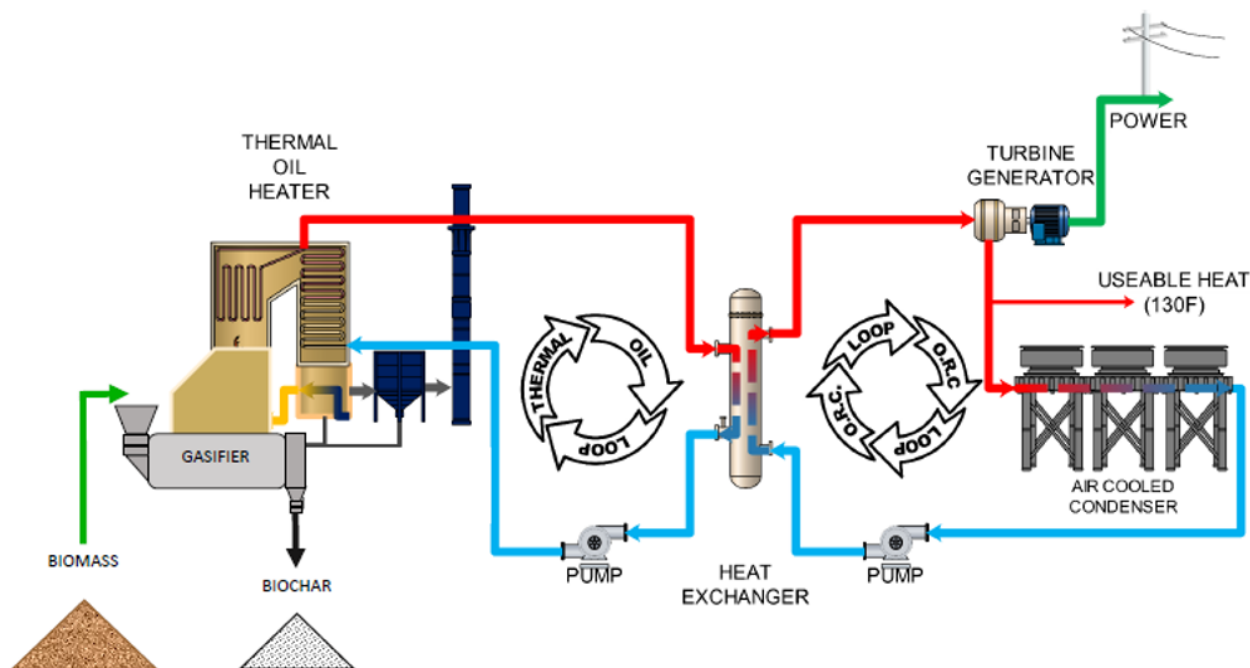
Hat Creek facility view of the feedstock yard

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Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Program Goals

Nearly one in six Americans live in rural or remote communities and face a unique set of energy challenges due to their smaller populations and isolation from larger electrical systems—including higher electric bills, unreliable energy supplies, and/or no access to electricity at all. The ERA Program aims to address these challenges by funding community-driven energy projects that demonstrate clean energy systems, deliver measurable and sustained benefits to people who live in rural or remote areas, and build clean energy knowledge, capacity, and self-reliance throughout rural America. This program will leverage DOE's expertise in resilient energy solutions while recognizing the unique environmental, cultural, and economic landscapes of rural and remote communities. The selected projects cover a range of clean energy technologies—from solar, battery storage systems and microgrids to hydropower, heat pumps, biomass, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure—to ensure new economic opportunities in every pocket of the nation.



Graphic depiction of the West Biofuels technology

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More Resources

Website: energy.gov/oced/era

Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations: energy.gov/oced



The U.S. Department of Energy established OCED to help scale the emerging technologies needed to tackle our most pressing climate challenges and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. OCED's mission is to deliver clean energy demonstration projects at scale in partnership with the private sector to accelerate deployment, market adoption, and the equitable transition to a decarbonized energy system.