



September 19, 2012

NR12065

News Release

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NMCC Celebrates Commissioning Of New Biomass Boiler

Aroostook County - Conserving energy and supporting the local economy—that will be the result of the new biomass boiler being commissioned today, Wednesday, September 19, at 10:30 a.m. at Northern Maine Community College.

The \$1 million boiler is the first of its kind for the entire Community College System in Maine and will provide heat to the two largest buildings on the NMCC campus. The boiler capacity will replace nearly 70 percent of the campus fuel oil consumption with local, renewable energy. Early projections estimate a total savings of more than \$43,000 in utility costs annually, and the replacement of an estimated 47,000 gallons of fuel oil with local pellets.

“The College is very grateful for the collaboration and generosity of the state and federal agencies, and private and local entities which made this plan a reality,” said Tim Crowley, NMCC President. “After 10 months of construction and installation, we will soon begin to benefit from significant energy cost savings, a new hands-on learning opportunity for our students, an economic boost for the region, and a reduction in carbon emissions.”

The new 900-kilowatt unit is replacing a more than 30-year-old boiler in the Mailman Trades Building, which houses classroom and lab space for many of the college’s trade and technology programs. A pellet silo (fuel storage) has been installed on a concrete pad just outside the boiler room. The project connects the trades building with underground piping to the Christie Complex, NMCC’s largest building, where most of the classrooms and campus offices are located.

The new biomass boiler represents a significant part of the new emphasis and curriculum at NMCC on alternative energy and conservation which also includes wind, solar and weatherization.

The project was made possible, in part, through a \$500,000 federal grant administered by the Maine Forest Service.

“Maine is the most forested state in the nation, and it should come as no surprise that this biomass project is good for the College, good for the community, good for forest landowners, and good for those working in the forest product industry,” said Robert Clark, group leader for forest manager for the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area. “Healthy forests and the clean water, air and forest products they provide they provide are essential to meeting the needs of society. And woody biomass is one of a suite of benefits and amenities that managed forests can sustainably provide to meet those needs.”

Philipp Lüscher, CEO of Schmid energy-group, the designer of the equipment from Switzerland, was on hand at the ceremony as well as state and local officials. He noted that this was the first biomass boiler of this type from his company that has been installed in North America.

More than \$3 million has been invested over the past few years to make the campus more energy efficient. Projects have included lighting and building upgrades, mechanical renovations and insulation and building controls installation.

The commissioning event will take place at the Residential Construction Lab in the Mailman Building.

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A number of individuals spoke during the event celebrating the commissioning of a new biomass boiler at Northern Maine Community College on September 19. They included, from left: Robert Clark, USDA Forest Service; President Timothy Crowley, Northern Maine Community College; Kris Doody, chair of the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees; Barry Ingraham, director of physical plant and technology at NMCC; and Philipp Lüscher, CEO of Schmid energy-group in Switzerland.



Philipp Lüscher, CEO of Schmid energy-group in Switzerland, presents a traditional Swiss gift to NMCC President Tim Crowley during the event celebrating the commissioning of the biomass boiler project at the College.



The new 900-kilowatt biomass boiler unit will heat the Mailman Trades Building and the Christie Complex, saving more than \$40,000 in fuel annually.



Wood pellets from Northeast Pellets of Ashland were delivered to NMCC recently in preparation of the firing up of the new biomass boiler. While the boiler has been run for testing, it will not begin regular operation until November.