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Secretary Gassman Announces \$463,488 Industry Partnership Training Grant to Fuel Bio-Energy Sector in Northern Wisconsin

During 'Up North' Tour, State Labor Secretary cites job opportunities

PARK FALLS – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$463,488 Wisconsin Industry Partnership grant to train workers for biofuel production in Northern Wisconsin, further advancing Governor Doyle's agenda to grow the state's clean energy economy.

"This training grant is another example of Governor Doyle's strategic investments to help Wisconsin create jobs and seize the opportunity to be a leader in the clean energy economy," Secretary Gassman said. "These funds will help ensure that workers will be job ready as the biofuels industry expands in northern Wisconsin."

Secretary Gassman awarded the grant to the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board, DWD's regional partner that proposed the Bio-Energy Sector Training project. The board worked with 15 employers in the biofuel, logging and paper production sector, including Flambeau River Papers, which will be powered by the new Flambeau River BioFuels bio-refinery plant once it is operational in 2013.

Through the grant, current employees and unemployed or underemployed workers will receive training in technology covering areas such as biomass harvesting and management. Chemical plant and system operators, chemists and first-line supervisors are among the jobs that will be supported through the 12-month grant project. With over \$490,000 in local matching resources, total funding for the training project will surpass \$900,000.

Secretary Gassman announced the grant during a visit to Park Falls as part of Governor Doyle's "Up North" Tour. Governor Doyle launched the Industry Partnership program early last year with nearly \$3 million. Last month, he announced another \$3 million for the program, which represents an innovative approach to training that involves area employers, labor unions, workforce development agencies, economic development agencies, technical colleges, K-12 schools, and University of Wisconsin institutions.

"Flambeau River BioFuels is charting a new path that that will grow our state's clean energy economy, protect our environment and help us gain energy independence," Secretary Gassman said. "At the same time, this course will lead to the creation of family-supporting jobs, and we must have skilled workers trained and ready."

The \$300 million Flambeau River BioFuels bio-refinery plant will be the first modern pulp mill bio-refinery in the country to produce green diesel. The U.S. Department of Energy recently awarded the project \$30 million. The bio-refinery is expected to add 100 jobs to the Park Falls community.

The grant is the latest in Governor Doyle's clean energy investments. In May, Governor Doyle signed legislation authorizing the \$100 million Green to Gold Fund, providing low-interest loans to help manufacturers reduce energy costs, improve their bottom line and create jobs. Additionally, \$1.75 million is being invested in the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Project to help small and mid-sized manufacturers use sustainable practices to gain a competitive edge. In addition, the DWD has awarded \$2.8 million in clean energy grants since 2008 to train more than 1,900 workers and help ensure skilled workers for the growing clean energy sector.