



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES FIRST GRANTS IN CREATIVE COW POWER PROGRAM

Almost \$500,000 for two Northern Stateline region farms who will turn waste into electricity

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced the first Cow Power grants to a pair of Stephenson County farms that will help both the environment and the economy by turning animal waste into electricity. A **\$225,000** *Opportunity Returns* grant is going to Scheidairy Farms in Freeport, while Hunter Haven Farms in Pearl City will receive a grant of almost **\$225,000**. The funds will be used to install state-of-the-art anaerobic digestion systems at both facilities. The Governor unveiled the Cow Power program last October as part of his *Opportunity Returns* plan for the Northern Stateline region to spur economic growth.

Anaerobic digesters are used to generate electricity from livestock waste. They work by accelerating the decomposition of the waste and capturing the methane gas produced by the process. The methane gas is then used to power a generator, which produces electricity and heat. Each farm will produce enough power for 60 homes. Because digesters eliminate odor problems associated with livestock, they can also help the livestock industry be a good neighbor.

“It is my hope that other dairy owners from across the state, and around the nation, will visit these facilities and take this state-of-the-art, environmentally beneficial technology back to their farms,” Governor Blagojevich said. “Since the livestock industry is such a major grain consumer, this innovative initiative also is going to be beneficial to Illinois’ agricultural economy. *Opportunity Returns* will continue funding these kinds of important projects that are beneficial to both the environment and our economy.”

The grant funds are through the State of Illinois’ Renewable Energy Resources Program administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

“The goals of the Renewable Energy Resource program are to achieve environmental quality, public health, and fuel diversity benefits. These two farms are ideal grant recipients of the program because cow power production accomplishes all three of these key objectives,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

Both farms will realize a substantial reduction in their electric bills and in bedding costs. The material by-product of the process is mostly lignin, an odorless material that resembles a shredded natural sponge and makes an excellent bedding material that can be used again and again, until it is broken down to the point where it can no longer be separated from the effluent. The effluent is a highly rich fertilizer. After the digestion processes, the effluents are more bio available than the typical lagoon dairy waste. This will help the effluents to be absorbed faster by plants and will significantly reduce the “run off” of these vital minerals.

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“This *Opportunity Returns* grant is a necessary part of pursuing our family farm’s goal of building a methane digester to produce electricity and bedding fiber for ourselves and others,” said Doug Scheider of Sheidairy Farms.

Beyond producing electricity from a renewable energy resource with a value-added end product, these projects also present a positive solution to one of agriculture’s growing problems – odor complaints.

“Receiving this renewable energy grant will help enable our family’s dairy farm to build a methane digester to produce electricity and create a bedding by-product. Without the Governor’s support, this project would not have been possible for our family to pursue,” said Doug Block, owner of Hunter Haven Farms.

Governor Blagojevich’s *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The 30 specific projects that the Governor announced in October for the Northern Stateline region are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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