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**NEW GUIDE TO WOOD ENERGY SHOWS COMMUNITIES HOW TO SAVE MONEY,
REPLACE OIL, EXPAND SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY**

Bristol, Vermont—As energy costs continue to rise, one Vermont community with the help of the Forest Guild and its partners has developed a community wood energy plan that saves money, reduces its dependence on oil, combats climate change, improves forest health, and supports local industries and workers.

The lessons the Bristol, Vermont community learned are now laid out step-by-step for the benefit of other communities in a just-released publication by Caitlin Cusack entitled *Harnessing the Power of Local Wood Energy*.



Cusack peers into the Mt. Abe boiler.

In 2006, Mt. Abraham Unified High School (Mt. Abe), located in Bristol, Vermont, installed a woodchip heating system. A broad-based group of students, teachers, and local residents wanted to ensure that wood used to heat the new system would be sourced in a way that is “Sustainable, Efficient, Local and Fair (SELF).” So they got involved in the woodchip procurement at all points along the supply chain.

The steps to create a reliable supply of woodchips sourced using a SELF standard include: consulting with local experts, identifying the suppliers and elucidating the wood supply chain from forest to school, developing a community-accepted procurement standard, and increasing the number of local family-forest owners who contribute to the woodchip supply. This innovative community wood energy program also gives landowners a financial incentive to engage in sustainable forest management that preserves other forest values including clean water, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

Mt. Abe also enlisted the help of regional forestry and wood energy experts, including the Forest Guild, Vermont Family Forests, the Northern Forest Alliance, Robert Turner of RJ Turner Company, and the Biomass Energy Resource Center.

Caitlin Cusack, Forest Guild summer intern and PhD student at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, worked with Forest Guild member David Brynn to determine the potential to supply SELF-rated woodchips for the boiler from local, sustainably managed woodlots. Throughout last fall and winter, Brynn identified and demonstrated how sustainably produced wood from local woodlots could supply Mt. Abe.

Cusack's just-released publication, *Harnessing the Power of Local Wood Energy*, is the first step-by-step guide that shows how rural communities throughout New England can profit from the Mt. Abe community's experience and follow in Mt. Abe's footsteps to develop their own community energy plan that saves money, reduces dependence on foreign oil, decreases carbon dioxide emissions, promotes forest health, and supports the local economy.

"The success of the Mt. Abe project has inspired the Forest Guild to grow our Community Wood Energy Project into other communities in the Northeast," says Bob Perschel, Northeast Region Director of the Forest Guild. "We are currently working with the Northern Forest Alliance (NFA) and other partners in New Hampshire and Maine to launch projects there."

The Community Wood Energy Project was made possible in part by generous funding from the Vermont Community Foundation, the Merck Family Fund, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

The Forest Guild, headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a national organization of more than 600 foresters, allied professionals, and supporters who manage forestlands in the United States and Canada and advocate for ecologically sound forest practices. The mission of the Forest Guild is to practice and promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry—"excellent forestry"—as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. The Forest Guild's Northeast Region includes the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York.

www.forestguild.org

**A COPY OF *HARNESSING THE POWER OF LOCAL WOOD ENERGY*,
AND INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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