

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SW Washington and bi-state partners receive \$5 million green jobs grant**

Southwest Washington will share in a \$5 million bi-state “green jobs” grant awarded to Oregon Manufacturing Extension Partnership (OMEP) US Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis announced today. The award is one of 25 nationally out of a pool of nearly \$100 million in green jobs training grants authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council was among a diverse group of partners throughout the metropolitan area that came together to develop the grant, including other workforce councils, education, labor, economic development and business organizations.

Southwest Washington will receive \$959,000 over two years for worker training and “lean green” assessments for local area manufacturers. These assessments will help manufacturers determine what they need to do in terms of retooling their production operations and up-skilling their workers to be able to support the renewable energy industry.

The project – called Renewable Northwest (ReNW) - will preserve and create over 1,700 jobs in a nine-county region in the renewable energy industry (electric power and biofuels) by building a skilled workforce to support companies that generate power and by assisting local manufacturers with retraining their workforce to produce products in support of the industry. Participants will earn certificates and degrees which meet industry and state-defined standards.

So far 37 companies have expressed interest in participating in the ReNW project, and have projected 775 new jobs over the next two years. Locally, Renewable Energy Composites (RECS) signed on in support of the grant application. Other southwest Washington manufacturers will be encouraged to participate.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to leverage the strong manufacturing capabilities we have in our region and help ensure that these companies have the workers they need as they retool to support new, emerging technologies,” said Lisa

Nisenfeld, SWWDC Executive Director. “We believe this project will help support and develop the renewable energy industry, create and preserve jobs, and provide training to connect people to the local area job opportunities.”

Community college training will begin this spring for workers in occupational and technical skills needed for green jobs already identified as “in demand.” At the same time, OMEP and its Washington counterpart, Washington Manufacturing Service (WMS), will conduct an analysis of the skills and production requirements of the renewable energy industry and identify those manufacturers deemed to be good candidates (with employee training) to develop/manufacture new product lines to support the industry.

In addition to SWWDC, OMEP, and WMS, partners in the ReNW Project include Clark College, Lower Columbia College, the Oregon/Washington bi-state WorkSource system, Cowlitz Economic Development Council, Columbia River Economic Development Council, WorkSystems Inc, Enterprise for Employment and Education, Workforce Investment Council of Clackamas County, Sheet Metal Workers Local 16, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Dist. No 24, Northwest Oregon Labor Council, Energy Trust of Oregon, and four community colleges in Oregon.

### **About the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council**

The Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC) provides leadership and resources to increase economic development by providing a trained and productive workforce in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum Counties. Led by a diverse board of representatives from business, labor, community-based organizations and government agencies, the SWWDC responds to the unique needs of SW Washington. For more information, visit [www.swwdc.org](http://www.swwdc.org).

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