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USDA Forest Service Recognizes Benefits of a Scaled Community Project that is Proactive for Healthy Forests

PAGOSA SPRINGS, Colorado – A rural inter-mountain west community is one step closer to healthy forests, being preemptive to beetle attacks and producing renewable energy. These great opportunities can become reality now that Pagosa Cattle Company has been awarded the Pagosa Long Term Stewardship (PLTS) contract. This is a 10 year contract that focuses on restoring the area's forests to Forest Service designations.

Pagosa Cattle Company, in collaboration with Renewable Forest Energy LLC, has the potential to bring over 30 jobs to an area struggling with double digit unemployment. Renewable Forest Energy, LLC will gasify the biomass procured from local forest management contracts. The gasification technology will turn the biomass into 5MWe of electricity. This amount of electricity will provide over 30% of the community's electrical needs.

Pagosa Cattle Company's type of forest health management plan will help: forest restoration, provide fire mitigation in WUI, increase ground water supply, boost local economy, improve the quality of wildlife habitats and many other forest health benefits. This contract is a result of many collaborative efforts from local citizens, environmental groups and elected officials. Having the support of our community is a key factor for success with any project. The collaborative efforts Pagosa Cattle Company has received from groups like the Mixed Conifer Working Group has been essential. This working group provides public education for appropriate regional forest health goals.

"This contract award has been worth the wait" expressed J.R. Ford, President of Pagosa Cattle Company, "it is a very good day for Pagosa". This contract aligns both the vision of taking biomass to energy as well as reestablishing a community scaled timber industry in Southwest Colorado where it has been dormant for years.

The local Pagosa Forest Service office has exuded professionalism and is always providing quality solutions to the many questions faced while processing the PLTS contract. The bidding process that we had to endure with the Forest Service has hopefully paved the way for other small communities.

Here's to proving this collaborative forest health & renewable energy business model opportunity so replication in other communities may be achieved.

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