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INL Idaho National Laboratory

MEDIA ADVISORY

Utah State University and Idaho National Laboratory Announce Partnership to Address Energy Issues

Who: Stan L Albrecht, President, Utah State University
Robert Behunin, Special Assistant to the President, Utah State University
Douglas Lemon, Interim Director, Utah State University Energy Dynamics Laboratory
Jeff Muhs, USTAR, USU Energy Dynamics Laboratory
David Hill, Deputy Laboratory Director, Idaho National Laboratory
J.W. (Bill) Rogers, Jr., Associate Laboratory Director, Idaho National Laboratory
Michael Hagood, Manager, Energy Systems Business Line, Idaho National Laboratory
Senator Kevin VanTassell
Representative John Mathis

What: News conference to announce strategic partnership with USU and INL, and outline how the team will collaborate to strengthen Utah's energy system.

When: Tuesday, October 13, 2009 at 3:00 pm

Where: Utah State Capitol, Rotunda; 120 State Capitol, 350 North State Street; Salt Lake City, Utah.

Contact: Dr. Robert Behunin, (435) 722-1766, robert.behunin@usu.edu

On October 13, 2009, Utah State University will formally announce its partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory (INL). This announcement comes after nine months of concerted efforts by both institutions to create a working relationship that will benefit the Rocky Mountain Region, Utah and, particularly, the Uintah Basin.

USU President Stan Albrecht notes that, "the opportunity to work with Idaho National Laboratory on projects in Logan and the Uintah Basin is what brought everyone together, and for the last few months our two staffs have been exploring various ways in which we can collaborate."

INL Director John Grossenbacher said the two institutions will demonstrate the viability of combining available technical and environmental resources.

"This collaboration between USU and INL will focus on meeting the energy challenges of tomorrow by helping unlock our vast domestic energy resources in an environmentally friendly and economic manner," said Grossenbacher. "Using our engineering and technical capabilities, along with the vast natural resources in the western energy corridor, we will help shape the next generation of electricity and energy resources to power this nation."

"There are significant opportunities for collaboration between USU and INL and for strengthening Utah's energy profile. At the center of our work is the Bingham Entrepreneurship

& Energy Research Center," explains Dr. Robert Behunin, Director of Eastern Utah Operations for USU's Energy Dynamics Lab.

The Bingham Entrepreneurship & Energy Research Center (Bingham Research Center) is located on USU's campus in Vernal, UT. The 70,000 square foot research center will play host to Utah State's Energy Dynamics Laboratory and to Idaho National Laboratory. The Bingham Research Center, which was made possible by a $15 million private donation from Marc and Debbie Bingham, is already changing the landscape in the Uintah Basin by attracting regional and national attention.

Jeff Muhs, a USTAR Professor and member of USU's Energy Dynamics Lab team, is quick to point out that "the Bingham Research Center is located in the heart of Utah's mineral resources. While we have many opportunities to do research and development in labs and on bench-tops, we also need a facility where the energy resources are located to demonstrate and deploy new energy technologies and systems."

Michael Hagood of Idaho National Lab is well aware of the great opportunities to work with the Bingham Research Center. "As a national lab partner, it is our opportunity and our good fortune to have a research facility located in the heart of the western energy corridor. As this partnership has evolved, it has always been our desire to strengthen the energy and economic profile of Utah and of the Uintah Basin."

In addition, the development of the resources in this area will be critical to the energy security of the United States in the 21st Century.

There are two specific areas of expertise that USU and INL are focusing on at the Bingham Research Center: environmental impact mitigation and hybrid energy systems.

"The first lab that we have jointly pursued is the energy-environment lab," says Behunin. "USU has significant experience in managing natural resources, especially in the areas of water, plants, soils, wildlife and air. Stewarding these elements in parallel to developing regional energy resources is critically important to our future. We also have had tremendous support and encouragement from the energy industry to pursue this effort."

The second lab will be a hybrid energy systems lab that will explore various ways to integrate traditional and renewable energy components into hybrid systems. "Our work and experience with solar, wind, and biomass will be of particular interest in a hybrid energy systems approach as we jointly pursue new ways to meet the escalating demand for energy in the US and the world," says Muhs. "But the long-term goal is to develop and implement a Uintah Basin Integrated Energy Strategy that will combine traditional energy production and end-use technologies with new production and environmental sensing and modeling tools."

The work to be conducted at the Bingham Research Center in Vernal, UT, will compliment hybrid energy systems testing being conducted at INL. Synergy between these two efforts will ultimately support more efficient energy production in the Uintah Basin while mitigating negative environmental impacts.

While there are no simple answers to the energy demands, USU and INL are certain that their new relationship will provide opportunities for new solutions. "We are taking a unique opportunity as a national lab," says Hagood, "and that opportunity is to look at the regional resources to see how we can help solve our nation's energy problems, together."

Doug Lemon, Interim Director of USU's Energy Dynamic's Laboratory in Logan, notes that the partnership of USU and INL will bring significant funding opportunities. "The USU/ INL partnership will give each institution greater capacity: more intellectual capital, more lab space, and with that the ability to attract and compete for funds."

Solving many of these energy related problems will be the work of scientist and researchers, but there will also be a strong role for students. President Albrecht points out that "we are already making use of our INL partnership. We have had student interns working with INL in Idaho. By having a more formal relationship and by having an INL presence in the Bingham Research Center, we will certainly provide more undergraduate and graduate research opportunities for our students."

For the local area, the Uintah Basin, it is an amazing opportunity. Vernal City Mayor Allan Mashburn, who spent more than 30 years in the oil and gas industry, is excited about the possibilities. "If someone would have told me 30 years ago that a national lab would be coming to Vernal to create a research hub, I would not have believed it. Over the years, we've made significant progress and this opportunity represents the next step in our community's quest for prominence in energy development and innovation."

"Going to the next level is what USU and INL are striving for," says Behunin. "The energy team we are building with this initial collaboration will no doubt grow to include other partners from education and industry as we find ways to align all our resources."

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