

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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LOCAL LEADERS TEAM UP TO SUPPORT NEW WOOD INDUSTRY JOBS

State Senator Phil A. Griego of San Jose and **Representative Richard D. Vigil** of Ribera led the legislative efforts in the 2006 session to bring infrastructure funding to San Miguel County in support of new jobs at a new Regional Sustainable Wood Business Park. The LVSMEDC requested \$1.2 million from the Governor and Legislature to acquire the former Medite site near Las Vegas and upgrade roads and drainage. Five hundred fifty thousand was awarded during the session from the Governor's and Legislature's capital outlay budgets.

"This is important," said **Senator Griego**, "We need to provide more opportunities for our rural folks to work close to where they live."

Initial tenants will provide close to 30 jobs upon move-in – with over 100 new jobs projected by year three. Healthy Buildings, the anchor tenant, has already committed to pay market lease rates on 30,000 sq ft and 5 acres, and the Wood Business Park is expected to generate revenue for growth and industry support from day one. Western Wood Products along with loggers and other forest-based businesses are slated to move into to the Park as well.

Representative Vigil initiated the capital outlay request in the House, with support from **Representative Hector H. Balderas** of Wagon Mound. **Senator Pete Campos** joined **Senator Griego** to work as a team to get the project funded. The Wood Business Park, located near Las Vegas, New Mexico, will serve all communities in Northeastern New Mexico.

The Park will be a 78 acre vertically integrated “incubator” facility for wood processors, manufacturers, loggers, craftspeople and sellers of firewood and forest products. Renewable energy, including wind and biomass generation and biodiesel, plus water catchment, are also planned.

Dr. Luis Ortiz, Executive Director of the EDC, explained, “This public/private partnership will provide a win-win for the region’s economy and our forests and watersheds. Businesses at the Park are expected to meet new market demand for biomass, mulch for NM highway landscaping, firelogs, wood fiber products, flooring, posts, wood pellets, etc. This economic benefit will be a natural spin-off of fuel reduction efforts in our forests, which will lessen the scope and severity of forest fires and enhance the water absorption capabilities of our vital watersheds. The Regional Wood Business Park will also serve as a model for other rural communities tied to forest economies.”

The Wood Business Park will be owned by San Miguel County and managed by the Las Vegas San Miguel County Economic Development Corp (LVSMEDC). Support for the Park comes from Highlands University’s new School of Forestry, the Biophilia Foundation, State Forestry Division and the US Forest Service, State Economic Development Department, and the Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.

Mayor Henry Sanchez of Las Vegas stressed the value of the Wood Business Park to the local economy. “Since the Medite plant closed 10 years ago, we haven’t had a hub for our traditional wood based businesses,” he said. “The City is solidly behind this regional center for water-efficient businesses that will create good paying jobs in a clean industry for our people.”

The County of San Miguel is purchasing the 78-acre site from ValHi Corporation of Dallas, TX, which performed a voluntary environmental cleanup after the Medite factory closed. The State Environmental Department issued a clean bill of health for the site.

Colleen Cayes, president of Healthy Buildings, credits the New Mexico Manufacturing Extension Partnership with influencing her decision to locate at the Regional Wood Business Park. “The support of **Carol Sanchez**, MEP’s director, and her terrific staff were indispensable in demonstrating the viability of this project for Las Vegas,” Ms. Cayes said. “When Albuquerque and Rio Rancho submitted competing bids, the MEP’s study bolstered my decision to locate in a rural community close to sources of wood and a skilled labor force in the wood products industry.” **David Old**, president of the Wood Cluster, is also a client of the MEP through his business, Old Wood, which manufactures Douglas fir floors in Las Vegas.

The Las Vegas San Miguel Economic Development Corporation (LVSMEDC) led a coordinated effort to obtain funding during the 2006 legislative session for the Wood Business Park. **Wayne Sonchar**, President of the EDC, met with **Governor Richardson** before the session, and he pledged his support. **Les Montoya**, County Manager, initiated the engineering study that provided cost estimates for upgrading the roads, utilities, and drainage at the site. San Miguel County **Commissioners Huey Ley** and **Leroy Garcia** represented the County at the Roundhouse during the session.

Eric Griego from the State Economic Development Department recognizes the value of creating a regional hub in Las Vegas for wood providers from Raton to Pecos. “Eric was right with us every step of the way, from the original meetings to key committee hearings at the Roundhouse,” said **Darien Cabral** of The Idea Group of Santa Fe. The Idea Group wrote the comprehensive business/marketing plan through a grant from the Rural Development Response Council (RDRC) and organized the Regional Wood Cluster. **Joel Scheinberg**, board member of both the RDRC and the LVSMEDC, oversees the Wood Cluster on behalf of the EDC. “We’ve received statewide support for this effort,” said Joel, “not only from the RDRC but also through funding to local wood businesspeople in Las Vegas and Mora through **Kim Kostelnik** at the State Division of Forestry.”