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NCAT SELECTS PARTICIPANTS FOR ENERGY TRAINING FOR AGRICULTURE PROFESSIONALS

Local ag professional will learn to help communities manage energy resources profitably and sustainably

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) recently selected 27 agriculture professionals from across the South to participate in the first Energy Training for Agriculture Professionals course (EnTAP).

The training, funded by USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, will be held near Goldsboro, N.C., from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. Tuition, materials, lodging, meal expenses and travel costs will be fully paid for participants.

The participants were selected from an extremely competitive pool of more than 70 applicants. The states represented include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The participants are mostly Cooperative Extension Service agents and specialists from 19 different Southern schools.

The local participant is **Mark Blevins of Gastonia**. Blevins works with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, where he transfers research-based information to horticulture farmers, gardeners, beekeepers and pesticide applicators through one-on-one communications, small group settings, large group seminars, formal recertification trainings and mass media. He plans to use what he learns at the training to offer energy audits for farmers and rural residents. He also hopes to conduct workshops and incorporate new information into Ten Acre Tuesday, a forum for farmers with small acreage and big dreams.

EnTAP will prepare graduates to lead training efforts in their own communities, helping local people manage their energy resources profitably and sustainably. Participants will gain familiarity with renewable energy technologies as well as energy efficiency opportunities commonly available to farms and rural landowners. They will learn about financial and technical resources, so they know where to look for answers and can make appropriate referrals. They will also learn about energy-related developments and opportunities, including networking with agriculture professionals from throughout the southern United States.

“We are trying to build support for renewable energy and energy efficiency within the Extension service, finding and connecting agents who have a personal commitment,” said co-chair Mike Morris of NCAT. “These employees are often isolated and under-appreciated. In most states, it’s still not possible for an Extension agent to build a career based on being an energy educator. We are trying to change that.”

Co-chairs Morris and Steve Moore have led hundreds of courses and workshops on energy and agriculture. Morris is the farm energy team leader at NCAT and holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh. Moore works in the Crop Science Department at North Carolina State University and directs the Small Farm Unit at CEFS. The steering committee for this project includes a distinguished group of agricultural educators and researchers from nine southern states and 14 universities. Course instructors will include nationally recognized experts on energy efficiency, bioenergy, solar energy and other forms of renewable energy. Instructors and agenda details will be posted as they become available, at www.entap.org.

Since 1976, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit National Center for Appropriate Technology has been promoting technologies that help people save energy, protect natural resources, and live better lives. NCAT offers training, publications, Web sites, personalized technical assistance, and telephone help lines to address issues ranging from housing and economics to environmental quality. Headquartered in Butte, Mont., NCAT also has offices in Fayetteville, Ark., Hammond, La., Davis, Calif., Shavertown, Pa., and Des Moines, Iowa.