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2 COMPANIES GET FUNDS FOR BIOMASS STUDIES

By Billings Gazette

HELENA - The Montana Department of Commerce is granting a total of \$425,000 to two energy companies to study the feasibility of building biomass energy plants in Western Montana.

Gov. Brian Schweitzer said Thursday that the department awarded \$300,000 to Porter Bench Energy LLC and \$125,000 to NorthWestern Energy. Schweitzer said the grant will help NWE assess the feasibility of building up to eight biomass electricity plants. Schweitzer said NWE will partner with state and federal agencies on the study.

Separately the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation will receive \$50,000 for its biomass programs.

The funding stems from the federal stimulus bill.