



## **For Immediate Release:**

### **September 20 Field Day to Showcase First North American Plantings of Willow Biomass at Commercial Scale**

More than 800 acres of shrub willow, a highly productive energy crop, has been planted this year in the Cape Vincent area. It will serve as part of the fuel supply for the ReEnergy Black River power facility located on the base at Fort Drum.

A field day on Friday, September 20 will allow farmers, landowners, extensions specialists, and members of the public to see a young willow planting and learn about the challenges and opportunities offered by this new, environmentally beneficial perennial crop.

Shrub willow has been under development by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse for more than 25 years. Willow breeding work continues at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, while propagation of planting material is carried out by Double-A Willow in Fredonia, NY. Shrub willow has been studied in test plantings in many locations around New York State, but there have only been a few previous commercial plantings, mainly in the area of the Lyonsdale biopower plant, also owned and operated by ReEnergy.

ReEnergy is the sponsor of a project funded by the USDA Biomass Crop Assistance Project (BCAP), which has provided cost sharing for the expense of establishing the willow plantings. The total acreage in the BCAP project (older and new plantings) is approximately 1200 acres.

Celtic Energy Farm in Cape Vincent has taken the lead role in planting this new energy crop in Jefferson County, as well as managing existing plantings in Lewis County near Lyons Falls. Technical support is being provided by the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and Cato Analytics, LLC, a consulting firm based in Central New York that specializes in agricultural supply chain development. USDA funding for crop establishment has been supplemented by a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) to foster grower education, job development, and outreach activities.

The Black River power facility was originally designed to burn coal. ReEnergy has converted the plant to run on renewable wood chips. In addition to serving as a customer for shrub willow chips, the facility provides stable demand for forest wood chips, supporting harvesting businesses in the North Country that have seen a gradual decline in demand for low-grade and cull timber from the paper industry. Operations were inaugurated on May 31, 2013.

The field day will take place on Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at Celtic Energy Farm, Middle Rd., Dexter, NY (between Timmerman Rd. and Rt. 59), GPS Coordinates 44.001675,-76.11062.

**2727 Ira Station Rd., Cato, NY 13303 telephone: 315-626-3656**

Signs at nearby crossroads will direct visitors to the field day location. Registration is not required. For more information call Chuck Kyle at 315-391-8949 or email: [chuck@catoanalytics.com](mailto:chuck@catoanalytics.com).

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