

Grant Will Buy Seed Crusher

By Gina Lindsey

A \$150,000 grant will reduce the cost of Catawba County's Biodiesel Research Facility, authorities said.

The grant will cut the cost of constructing a feedstock processing center for the research facility in half, said county Utilities and Engineering Director Barry Edwards.

He said the funding from the North Carolina Biofuels Center will purchase a feedstock-crushing machine, which removes the oil from the county's sunflower and canola crops. Crushing the seeds is a necessary step in the production of biodiesel that is already being produced from crops grown around the Blackburn Landfill, located off Rocky Ford Road. The fuel can then be used in diesel-powered equipment used on the landfill.

The county is building a Biodiesel Research and White Good Freon Recovery Facility, where graduate students from Appalachian State University will test biodiesel produced from crops grown around the Blackburn Landfill.

The purpose of the project is to optimize the amount of fuel that can be produced from the county's crops and determine the best types of crops to use. ASU is expecting to lease the building for at least five years once it's complete and provide the county with about 3,750 gallons of biodiesel fuel monthly.

The facility is due to be complete within a year, but small amounts of biodiesel are already being produced.

To this point, Catawba County has relied on a hand-operated seed crusher that is brought to the landfill from ASU. The machine is small and inefficient and does not meet the demands of the Biodiesel Research Facility, said Edwards.

He said the new seed crusher will "greatly" increase the efficiency of the Biodiesel Research Facility with increased output and improved yield storage.

The acceptance of the grant is still pending approval from the Catawba County Board of Commissioners at its meeting Monday at 7 p.m. at the 1924 Courthouse in Newton.