Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest

Kevin W. Zobrist
Area Extension Educator

Shiba Kar
Regional Extension Specialist and Educator, Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Program

Patricia Townsend
Regional Extension Specialist and Educator, Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest

Nora Haider
Biofuels Program Assistant, Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest

Washington State University Extension
Everett, WA, USA

Advanced Hardwood Biofuels Northwest (AHB) is a USDA-funded project to explore the development of biofuels from fast-growing hybrid poplars in the Pacific Northwest. To reduce net greenhouse gas emissions, secure greater energy independence, and promote economic development, the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS2) has set ambitious targets for replacing fossil fuel with renewable biofuel. The goal of the AHB project is to produce renewable fuels that are fully compatible with existing infrastructure, and be certified to run in car, truck, aircraft, and other types of engines.

AHB comprises five teams. The feedstock team is researching the best clonal varieties and cultivation practices to grow hybrid poplar for biofuel feedstock. The conversion team is developing a biological and chemical process to convert poplar chips into biofuels and other bioproducts. The sustainability team is assessing the economic viability of poplar biofuels as well as the impacts on the carbon cycle, wildlife, soil, water, and people. The education team is focusing on workforce preparation for the bioenergy industry, with both K-12 and higher education programs. The extension team is developing communication and technical assistance tools to prepare stakeholders for a new industry and new crop opportunities This session will provide an overview of the AHB project, the people involved, the project goals, key research questions being studied, and some of the potential challenges and pitfalls that would need to be addressed for such a system to be successful.