

## County Awarded Grant for Buck Stove Project

RALEIGH – Mitchell County has been awarded a grant to help pay for the cost of building renovations at Buck Stove in Spruce Pine so the company can house an emissions lab.

The \$46,850 grant from the state Department of Commerce will go toward a \$154,000 project at the company's 300,000-square-foot facility, located off Halltown Road south of Spruce Pine. The county will provide a local grant match of \$2,342, and Buck Stove will cover the rest of the cost.

Buck Stove is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency – the company makes wood-burning stoves that have to meet emissions standards. Presently, Buck Stove sends stoves to Oregon to undergo testing by a company working for the EPA, according to Claudia Honeycutt, who does sales and marketing for Buck Stove.

Buck Stove sends a team to Oregon in order to perform any necessary modifications to their products. Having an emissions lab at the Spruce Pine facility will allow Buck Stove to know if its products meet EPA standards before being sent to Oregon, making the whole process more efficient, Honeycutt said.

Presently, the EPA's smoke-emission limit for wood stoves is 4.5-grams per hour. In 2020, it will drop to 2-grams per hour. Buck Stove has been working toward meeting the new standard for over a year, Honeycutt said, adding they recently had their first stove pass the test.

If they can't meet EPA requirements, Honeycutt said, they can't do business.

"For us, getting this grant was about keeping the 100-plus employees here," Honeycutt said about the company's workforce.

As part of the grant, Buck Stove committed to adding five permanent jobs. Honeycutt said those jobs will be two fabrication positions, two welders and testers, and a research development director.

The renovation project begins "immediately," she said.

Mitchell's is one of 19 grant and loan requests, totaling \$5.1 million, awarded Aug. 18 by Gov. Pat McCrory through Commerce's Rural Infrastructure Authority – The requests include commitments to create a total of 195 new jobs at sites across the state.

The city of Marion received a \$25,000 grant for the reuse of a vacant building that will house Fat Boy's Burritos. The start-up eatery will create five jobs. The grant supports a total capital investment of \$51,250.

Rutherford County received a \$311,000 loan to support the reuse of a vacant building to house McConnell Group Public Relations Inc., and Artfacturing, a design and manufacturing consulting firm. The loan will support a total capital investment of \$411,000.

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