



BIOMASS BUSTERS



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Clean energy doesn't come out of a smokestack...

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From the Editors

Meg Sheehan & Josh Schlossberg

The world is realizing that biomass burning as a “clean and green” energy source is a fairy tale based on myths and misinformation. That realization resulted in a July announcement by Massachusetts that it will move forward with regulations to limit the types of biomass incinerators that can qualify under the state “renewable portfolio standard.” This decision, based on the scientific studies reported in the July issue of **BIOMASS BUSTERS**, reflects pure common sense: biomass incinerators shouldn't be getting the same taxpayer and ratepayer subsidies as renewable energy that doesn't have a smokestack belching out toxic pollutants 24/7/365.

Massachusetts advocates will be working hard to bring their message to other states whose renewable portfolio standards wrongfully include biomass incinerators and we welcome your help.

For submissions, feedback or to sign up for email version contact us at biomassbusters@gmail.com.

BIOMASS BUSTERS is a project of the Biomass Accountability Project, Inc., Energy Justice Network, Biofuelwatch, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, and Save America's Forests.

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State Lines

Massachusetts Plans to Limit Biomass Subsidies

July 7, 2010 The *Stop Spewing Carbon (SSC) Campaign* will not be taking its question to limit renewable energy credits for biomass incinerators to the November ballot. The decision followed an announcement by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that it will move forward with regulatory changes to bring state law in line with current science and public policy, and will require biomass incinerators to meet strict standards for forest protection, greenhouse gas emissions, and efficiency.



“This is a seismic shift in the way biomass incinerators are treated under the law. Science confirms that the greenhouse gas emissions of burning forests are worse than coal and there's no reason to subsidize this form of energy,” said Meg Sheehan, chair of the *SSC Campaign*.

“Our committed and diverse coalition of social justice, public health, environmental, forest advocates, and fiscal watchdogs have won a victory for Massachusetts, the nation, and indeed the planet,” said Sheehan. The *Campaign* will closely monitor the upcoming regulatory process to ensure that the laws are strict enough to meet the commitments laid out by the Commonwealth in its July 7 letter, which can be read in its entirety at www.stopspewingcarbon.com.

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From the Forest

Manomet Study Underestimates CO2 Emissions from Biomass

July 9, 2010 *Clean Air Task Force* has issued a review of Manomet Center for Conservation Studies' *Biomass Sustainability and Carbon Policy Study*, claiming the study "underestimated the net carbon emissions of biomass power," according to report author Dr. Mary Booth.

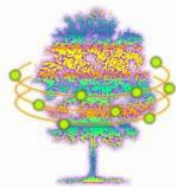
While agreeing with Manomet study findings that biomass CO2 emissions exceed coal and natural gas over a several decade time frame, the report states that the Manomet results are skewed by a list of inaccurate assumptions and should be "viewed by policy-makers as an extreme best-case scenario unlikely to be achievable in reality."

The review also disputes the findings that combined-heat and power, or CHP, provide carbon "dividends" after only 5 years, stating "actual biomass emissions likely exceed fossil fuel emissions even under the thermal and CHP scenarios."

The report can be found at www.catf.us.

Groups Sue Over GE Trees for Biofuels

July 1, 2010 A coalition of conservation organizations sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture for its May 12 permit approval for ArborGen to conduct 28 "field tests" of genetically engineered, cold-tolerant eucalyptus trees across seven southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. ArborGen hopes to eventually grow these eucalyptus at a commercial scale for biofuels and paper pulp.



Quabbin Reservation, Boston's drinking water supply

Photo: Chris Matera, www.maforests.org

"In refusing to prepare a detailed environmental review, the Department of Agriculture ignored serious risks before permitting this action," said Mark Fink, an attorney with the *Center for Biological Diversity*.

The organizations that filed suit are the *Center for Biological Diversity*, *Sierra Club*, *Dogwood Alliance*, *International Center for Technology Assessment*, *Center for Food Safety*, and *Global Justice Ecology Project*.

New England Losing Forest Cover

June 8, 2010 Harvard Forest at Harvard University released *Wildlands and Woodlands: A Vision for the New England Landscape*, which documents an alarming loss of forest cover in New England following 200 years of forest regeneration, and calls for retaining 70% of New England forests.

The report states that "all six New England states are expected to experience dramatic rates of forest loss over the next 20 years," due to factors such as development, intensive logging and climate change.

The report also warns of the potential impacts of forest biomass incineration: "Rising pressures for wood-based bioenergy to supply the region and other countries may intensify adverse harvesting practices and substantially change the timber economy." ❖

Our Health

Biomass: Separating Fact From Fiction

Dr. Tom Termotto, BCIM, DCAE,
Coalition Against Chemical Trespass

Let's not forget the golden rule of energy production: "Garbage in; garbage out." Ultimately the permitting process for biomass incinerators often allows for the burning of various types of refuse and other feedstocks, which will degrade air quality. A close look at any state air permit application for these incinerators will reveal the mix of carcinogens, toxins, pollutants, contaminants, and poisons, which is really quite alarming.

What follows is an excerpt from the *Healthcare Professionals for Clean Environment* in their letter to Governor Charlie Crist of Florida regarding a proposed biomass incinerator for Gadsden County, Florida:

Biomass incinerators of this type will produce extraordinary amounts of air pollution to include dioxin, one of the most toxic and carcinogenic organic chemicals released into the environment...This incinerator will also significantly contribute to the total particulate matter volume...

Particulate matter (PM) concentration directly correlates with a whole host of upper respiratory ailments to include sinusitis, rhinitis, pharyngitis, laryngitis, as well as common cold symptoms. More serious respiratory diseases such as lung cancer, emphysema, pneumonia, tuberculosis, pulmonary edema, sarcoidosis, pleurisy and adult respiratory distress syndrome are all greatly aggravated by the various pollutants emitted from biomass plants.

In an age when the nation is moving toward more enlightened energy platforms concerning production, dissemination and utilization, it is quite anachronistic that some would have us go back to the Stone Age. Why in the world, with a global population approaching 7 billion, would we want to go back to energy sources that are as primitive as they are downright dirty?! ❖

State Lines (continued)

Indiana Beats Back Biomass

July 7, 2010 A county Area Plan Commission (APC) board in southern Indiana's Scott County voted 4-2 against the development plan of a large biomass incinerator proposed for Scottsburg by Liberty Green Renewables, likely ending the looming threat of construction. The Commission's action is the result of citizen advocacy against the incinerator on the part of *Concerned Citizens of Scott County* and others.



Coal to biomass isn't "green"
Photo: www.climateprogress.org

Ohio Fights Coal-to-Biomass Conversion

The *Buckeye Forest Council* is leading a fight against FirstEnergy Corporation's plans to convert its 312-megawatt coal incinerator to 100% forest biomass. The massive incinerator would devour 3 million tons of green wood—10 million trees—a year, requiring a 276% increase in logging above current state levels.

"With 1600-2100 megawatts pending approval" across the state, said Cheryl Johncox, acting Executive Director of the *Council*, "biomass in Ohio will be a huge sucking machine that will burn up trees across the entire eastern U.S."

On May 31, 2010 *Ohio Consumer and Environmental Advocates* (OCEA) filed a motion asking the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to dismiss FirstEnergy Corporation's application. ❖

Trashing the Climate

Fighting Toxic Waste Dump Expansion

June 23, 2010 Over 100 Kettleman City, California residents marched and rallied to oppose plans to expand the largest hazardous waste site on the west coast, located just miles outside of town. “We don’t want an expansion to what is already a very large toxic dump to add to our burden,” said Maricela Maris-Alatorre.



Kettleman City youth march
Photo: www.indybay.org

Many residents blame the dump for several cases of infant mortality and at least 10 babies born with birth defects since 2007, such as Maura Alatorre’s 2 year-old son born with a cleft palate and under-developed brain.

King County officials have given the green light to the dump expansion and the project awaits state and federal approval. ❖

Legislation Watch

Senator Tester’s Forest Giveaway

Senator Jon Tester’s (D-MT) *Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (S. 1470)* would designate new Montana wilderness but sacrifice over 100,000 acres to logging, and require a biomass study to “facilitate and encourage the use of biomass recovered from forest land as an energy source.”

George Wuerthner, ecologist with the *Foundation for Deep Ecology*, said: “Well meaning and dedicated environmental groups that participated in this collaboration adopted a bill that has a direct financial benefit to private business interests, degrades public forests, and

Solutions

Micro Hydro Power: Pros and Cons

Alternative Energy

www.alternative-energy-news.info/micro-hydro-power-pros-and-cons

Small-scale micro hydro power is both an efficient and reliable form of energy, most of the time. However, there are certain disadvantages that should be considered before constructing a small hydro power system. It is crucial to have a grasp of the potential energy benefits as well as the limitations of hydro technology.

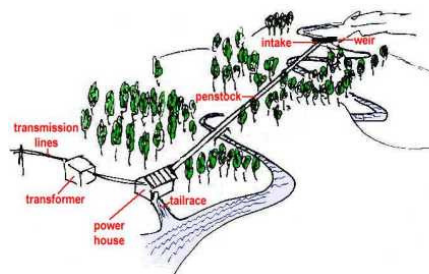


Photo: www.microhydropower.net

PROS: Efficient energy source. Reliable electricity source. No reservoir required. Cost effective energy solution. Integrate with the local power grid.

CONS: Suitable site characteristics required. Energy expansion not possible. Low-power in the summer months. Environmental impact. ❖

compromises and restricts public participation in the management of public forests.”

“A number of national, regional and state wide wilderness advocacy group professionals have told me they are worried that if Tester’s bill passes, it will become the new ‘norm’ so that the only way a wilderness bill will be successful is if it is packaged as a resource giveaway to some industry,” said Wuerthner.

TAKE ACTION!

Contact Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) and urge him to remove the logging and biomass provisions from the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act (S. 1470). Contact: 202-224-2644 or tester.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm