

Biomass Busters

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From the Editors

Meg Sheehan & Josh Schlossberg

What do trees and garbage have in common? According to corporate marketers and some lawmakers, incinerating them for electricity will ensure a “clean and green” future for the planet! All it takes is a few billion dollars of your taxpayer and ratepayer money and we’ll populate the country with biomass and garbage burning incinerators that will rain toxics on us every day for decades!

The good news is there’s a mounting opposition as community members join medical doctors, forest advocates, and anti-toxics groups to expose the scam. *Biomass Busters* is out to celebrate victories against this misguided energy policy and keep you updated on how concerned citizens of all political stripes and walks of life are making a difference. We’ll report on local and national trends and let you know what Congress is up to when it comes to handouts for the biomass and incinerator industry.

We’re out to stop the scam, change the laws, and keep politicians honest. For submissions and feedback contact us at stopspewingcarbon@gmail.com.

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

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State Lines

Victories in Florida

April 2010 A citizen appeal of an air pollution permit for a proposed 47 megawatt wood-burning incinerator in Port St. Joe has led Biomass Gas and Electric (BG&E) to withdraw its permit application from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.



March 2010 Citizen backlash against a proposed 55 megawatt biomass incinerator in the city of Gretna has caused ADAGE (a partnership between Duke Energy and AREVA) to withdraw its air pollution permit application from the state. Advocacy by citizens such as James Maloy Jr., President of the *Concerned Citizens of Gadsden County*, raised enough questions about the plant that the city council postponed its approval, resulting in ADAGE withdrawing its permit application later that day.

Massachusetts Ballot Measure Update

Over 100,000 Massachusetts voters signed a petition to qualify a measure for the November 2010 statewide ballot that would deny renewable energy credits to biomass and garbage burning

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From the Forests

Biomass and Future Forests

Roy Keene, Forester, Oregon

The arrival of wood-fueled power generators heralds a final stage in industrial forest conversion—a conversion that reduces old growth forests to saw timber stands, then to poles, and finally to chip wood. As tree size shrinks, so does the work force and the communities that depend on wood products employment. As a few timber barons become wealthier, the rest of us—left with devalued forests, degraded water, disrupted fisheries and declining jobs—become poorer. Without slowing the final stages of forest plunder, Lane County, Oregon will, as other regions have already, inherit an impoverished fiber-farm legacy.

Massachusetts Chainsaw Massacre

Chris Matera, Massachusetts Forest Watch

In Massachusetts, five large biomass plants totaling 190 megawatts (MW) of generation are proposed that target *public* forests for a more than 1,000% increase in logging (yes, you read that correctly) and would require a quadrupling of logging overall on all forests to supply enough wood. These plants would burn 2,500,000 green tons of wood and release 2,500,000 tons of CO₂ emissions annually, causing a 10% increase over current statewide power plant CO₂ emissions (biomass power plants release 50% more CO₂ per MWhr than coal and 150% more than gas).

New power produced from these plants would have enormous forest, waterway, carbon and pollution impacts, yet increase generation capacity only 1% more than today's Massachusetts generating capacity of 14,000 MW. Achievable efficiency and conservation measures could reduce electrical use by 30% and cost one-third as much as new production.



Logging for biomass in Wendell State Forest, Massachusetts

Dead Trees Make a Forest

George Wuerthner, Ecologist, Vermont

One of the primary assumptions of biomass energy advocates is that we can remove trees from forest ecosystems without significantly damaging the landscape. But trees, particularly dead trees, are very important to long term ecosystem sustainability. Most of our managed forests have a severe deficiency of downed dead wood. Biomass extraction will only exacerbate this condition.

The argument that “thinning” or biomass removal will reduce wildfires in western forests ignores the fact that most fires are driven by climatic conditions, not fuels. While thinning can sometimes temporarily reduce fire hazard (it also often makes it *worse*), even under the best situations the effects are short lived. Within a few years new growth can actually *increase* flammability of forests since it is the fine fuels, shrubs, and small trees that help to carry a flame through the forest.

Finally, fuels are not the driving force in fires. You will get a big blaze regardless of the biomass available if drought, high winds and low humidity dominate the climatic/weather conditions. If one looks at the total ecological impacts of biomass removal, it's apparent that it does not benefit forest ecosystems, and when one considers the low energy return on investment from burning wood, biomass energy is a poor choice for dealing with our current and future energy needs. ❖

Our Health

Massachusetts Medical Society Opposes Wood Burning Power Plants

Massachusetts Medical Society's December 2009 press release states: "On the grounds that biomass power plants pose an unacceptable risk to the public's health by increasing air pollution, the Massachusetts Medical Society has adopted a policy opposing three currently proposed large-scale biomass power plants in Massachusetts and urging state government to adopt policies to minimize the approval and construction of new biomass plants."



Toxic Air Emissions

A rundown of some of the pollutants from Seneca Sawmill's proposed biomass incinerator in Eugene, Oregon and their health impacts:

| Pollutants | Cancer | Heart | Lung | Other |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|------|------------------------|
| Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) | | | | Premature death |
| Carbon Monoxide (CO) | | | | |
| Formaldehyde | | | | |
| Particulates (PM10, PM 2.5) | | | | Diabetes |
| Hydrogen chloride (HCl) | | | | |
| Benzene | | | | |
| Chlorine | | | | |
| Naphthalene | | | | |
| Toluene | | | | Harm to nervous system |
| Styrene | | | | |
| Sulfur Dioxide (SO2) | | | | |
| Acetaldehyde | | | | |

Information compiled from:
<http://oregontoxics.org/AQ/Seneca/airpollution.html>

State Lines (continued)

power plants unless they lower their carbon dioxide emissions. *Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign* has until June 23 to collect the final round of 11,000 certified signatures needed to officially make the ballot.

Opposition in Indiana

In their 17 month fight against two wood-burning power plants, citizens in the Southern Indiana towns of Scottsburg and Milltown have become a source of inspiration for communities across the nation.

Citizens such as Cara Beth Jones and Lori Crecelius of *Concerned Citizens of Crawford County* have aggressively worked the media; gained the support of several politicians and candidates; held meetings with government officials; helped push forward bills against burning construction debris and to reduce subsidies for biomass fuel production; and gained support from 75,000 doctors nationwide. These efforts have led to increased public scrutiny of Liberty Green Renewables' two biomass projects and have delayed final approval on state and local levels.

Sick & Tired Pennsylvanians

After a three year fight, Erie, Pennsylvania-based *Keep Erie's Environment Protected (KEEP)*, with help from *Energy Justice Network*, was able to prevent the construction of the world's largest tire incinerator in their city. The company is now trying to relocate in Crawford County, PA where a new group, *Crawford Area Residents for the Environment (CARE)* is taking up the fight.

Same Old Cr*p in Virginia

In February, Energy Justice Network heard from a handful of residents in Page County, Virginia who wanted to stop a proposed poultry waste incinerator. EJN connected them with folks across the U.S., Europe and Australia and within a month, Page County sent the incinerator packing. ❖

Trashing the Climate

Incineration Remains a Serious Threat

Ananda Lee Tan, *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives*

For decades the tobacco industry told us that cigarettes were safe. Now the waste incineration industry wants us to believe they are coming clean? Attempts to peddle waste-to-energy facilities haven't gained wide acceptance around the world because people are aware that incineration:

Remains a serious threat to public health. Burning garbage is a primary source of cancer-causing dioxins and other pollutants that enter the food supply and concentrate up through the food chain.

Produces more carbon dioxide per unit of electricity than coal power. Current atmospheric carbon loads cannot safely bear additional emissions from incinerators and landfills.

Creates an economic burden for communities. Billions of taxpayer dollars are spent subsidizing the construction and operation of incinerators. For a fraction of this cost, investments in recycling, reuse and remanufacturing create significantly more business and employment opportunities. ❖

Legislation Watch

Climate Bill Calls Incinerators "Clean"

The Kerry-Lieberman climate change bill does more harm than good when it comes to public health and the environment. Part of the problem is that the bill is being written by the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, a coalition of businesses paired up with environmental groups who are supposed to be standing up for the environment, our communities and public health. But the Big Greens aren't doing their job.

The 111th Congress' third attempt at a climate bill was set for release on April 26, when Senator

Solutions

Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Northwest Community Energy

Energy conservation and energy efficiency are the most powerful tools in our transition to a clean energy future.



Northwest SEED

As depicted in the Energy Pyramid, renewable energy is an important piece of our energy future, but the largest opportunities are currently in energy conservation and efficiency. Please make conservation and efficiency your top priority, as you work to move your community into our clean energy future. ❖

Graham bailed out at the last minute, delaying the bill's unveiling.

It's reported that the bill will have a "Renewable Electricity Standard" mandating that every state get a certain amount of its electricity from "renewable" sources. And guess what's called "clean" renewable energy under the bill? *Burning "biomass," construction and demolition debris, garbage and more!*

TAKE ACTION!

Send a message urging Congress to remove "clean" energy subsidies from biomass incinerators:
http://www.change.org/energyjustice/petitions/view/climate_bill_more_harm_than_good