



# BIOMASS BUSTERS



February 2011

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

Volume 2, Issue 2

## From the Editor

*Rachel Smolker, Co-Managing Editor*

A few days ago, an old time climate activist friend remarked with some envy: “this biomass issue seems to be the place where the REAL organizing is going on lately, with people pulling together from the grassroots up!”

Just some examples from our grassroots: Cara Beth Jones from *Concerned Citizens of Crawford County* and Pat Berna from *Concerned Citizens of Scott County* have been key in opposing *Liberty Green Renewables'* plans for biomass power in Indiana! We have a truly awesome community of dedicated and skilled people—a bright spot on the landscape of environmental activism!

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

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*For submissions, feedback, to sign up for e-newsletter or to become a distributor, contact us at [biomassbusters@gmail.com](mailto:biomassbusters@gmail.com) or find us on Facebook.*

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## State Lines

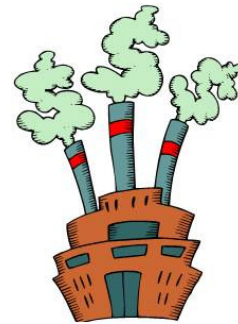
### Oregon Paper Mill Won't Burn Biomass

*(source: Albany Democrat-Herald, Jan. 7, 2011)*

A proposal by *Adage*—a joint venture with nuclear power producer *Areva* and *Duke Energy*—to convert a closed International Paper mill in Millersburg, Oregon into a biomass power incinerator has fizzled.

*Adage* reportedly has plans to build five more biomass power incinerators in the U.S., including a 50-megawatt facility in Mason County, Washington.

In March, citizen backlash against a proposed 55-megawatt biomass power incinerator in Gretna, Florida caused *Adage* to cancel the project.



### Anti-Biomass Coalition to Lobby D.C.

*Biomass Accountability Project* has organized a panel of medical, scientific and financial experts for a Congressional briefing in February to educate lawmakers on the negative health, climate, and economic impacts of biomass power incineration.

Massachusetts environmental attorney Meg Sheehan will discuss the financial impacts of tax subsidies for biomass power and Dr. Mary Booth, also of Massachusetts, will demonstrate potential climate impacts from logging forests for biomass.

*Continued on page 3*

# From the Forest

## Biomass Half of “Renewable” Energy

**December 29, 2010** Biomass and biofuels make up 51.95% of “renewable” energy sources in the U.S., according to the *U.S. Energy Information Administration’s Monthly Energy Review*.

Renewable energy in the U.S. accounts for 10.18% of electrical generation in the first three quarters of 2010. After biomass and biofuels, hydropower was 31.5%, wind 10.52%, geothermal 4.65%, and solar 1.38%.

Currently, fossil fuels provide 78% of U.S. energy while 11.4 % is from nuclear power.

Comparing the first three quarters of 2010 to the first three quarters of 2009, biomass and biofuels expanded by 10%, geothermal by 1.8%, solar by 2.4%, and wind by 26.7%, while hydropower declined by 5.2%.

### BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month

*Rachel Smolker – Hinesburg, Vermont*



Dr. Rachel Smolker of *Biofuelwatch* ([www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/uscampaign.php](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/uscampaign.php)) is one of the leading figures in the anti-biomass incineration movement. Rachel is lead author of *The Real Cost of Agrofuels: Impacts on Food, Forests, People and Climate*, a contributor to *The New Biomasssters* (with *ETC Group*), and has contributed to numerous other reports, briefings and articles on bioenergy.

Rachel travels around the United States and the world to talk on issues of forest preservation, climate protection and environmental justice.

## Ohio to Clearcut 1 Million Acres for Biomass Power Incineration

**December 20, 2010** *American Electric Power (AEP)*, one of the nation’s largest power companies, claims that a 200-megawatt biomass power incinerator—operating at 70% capacity or 140-megawatts—would require 510,000 to 730,000 acres worth of forest clearcuts on 40 year rotations.

*AEP Ohio* plans to generate 150-megawatts of biomass energy by 2018 and 238-megawatts by 2027.



Ohio has 7.9 million acres of forestland, 952,500 publicly owned, according to Nathan Johnson, staff attorney for the *Buckeye Forest Council*. *AEP’s* desired 238-megawatts of biomass power would require 1,240,932 acres of 40 year clearcut rotations—1/6 of all forestland in Ohio.

*AEP’s Long Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio* admits “possible drawbacks” to biomass power incineration and co-firing with coal include “reduced plant efficiencies due to lower energy content fuels” and “volatile costs of transportation.”

The report states that “biomass has many competing demands, such as the pulp and paper markets, agricultural industries and the ethanol market, which can dramatically escalate the market price for the material.” ❖

# Our Health

## American Lung Association Worried About Biomass Incineration



[Below are excerpts from a Dec. 14, 2010 letter by Rebecca L. Ryan, Director of Health Promotion and Public Policy for American Lung Association in Vermont, to the Vermont State Legislature's Biomass Energy Development Working Group.]

Burning wood, like burning any substance, releases toxic chemicals and particles which affect the environment and respiratory health. In particular, biomass emissions contain fine particulate matter, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and various irritant gases such as nitrogen oxides that can scar the lungs. Like cigarettes, biomass emissions can also contain chemicals that are known or suspected to be carcinogens, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and dioxin.

For vulnerable populations, such as people with asthma, chronic respiratory disease, and those with cardiovascular disease, biomass emissions are particularly harmful. Even short exposures can prove deadly. A growing number of studies are pointing to the direct impact of increased particle pollution levels and an increase in heart attacks. The health impact of particle pollution is not limited to individuals with pre-existing conditions.

The ALA believes that we cannot afford to trade our health to meet our energy needs. We strongly support rapid movement towards clean, safe and renewable energy to protect our environment and the air we breathe. ❖

# State Lines (continued)

## New Hampshire Incinerator Fined

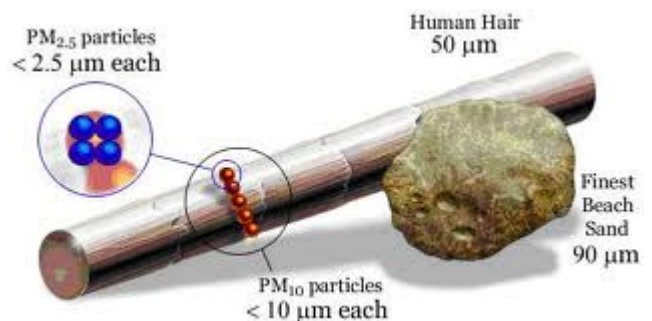
(source: Nashua Telegraph. Dec. 22, 2010)

The 50-megawatt Northern Wood Power Project at Schiller Station in Portsmouth, New Hampshire was fined \$53,000 for emission above lawful levels of pollutants for particulate matter, measured on September 11, 2008.

Northern Wood Power Project, one of the largest biomass power incinerators in New England, was converted from a coal-fired boiler to a “fluidized bed boiler” that can burn forest biomass or coal.

The state permit allows for 7.2 pounds per hour emission of particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter, also known as PM 10. The permit does not measure the amount of PM 2.5, 1/20 the width of a human hair.

Studies from the *American Cancer Society* demonstrate that there is no safe level of exposure to particulate matter.



## Robot Eats Trees for Electricity

(source: 2<sup>nd</sup> Green Revolution. Dec. 19, 2010)

The Energetically Autonomous Tactical Robot System (EATR) eats wood chips, dried leaves and other vegetation and is being tested at the *University of Maryland*.

Funding for EATR comes from the federal government's *Defense Advance Research Projects Agency*. ❖

# Trashing the Climate

## Waste and Injustice

*Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)*

[www.no-burn.org](http://www.no-burn.org)

No community is disposable. Yet most incinerator and landfills are disproportionately sited in marginalized communities—violating the principles of environmental justice.

People of color and minority communities, people of low socioeconomic status, indigenous communities and nations, people in the global south and other populations that often lack political and economic power are inequitably burdened with pollution from incinerators and dumps.



Because of this, *GAIA's* leadership understands that we will never win unless we see our specific mission as inseparable from those of other movements for social and environmental justice. ❖

## Legislation Watch

### EPA Defers Biomass Permitting and Launches Study

**January 12, 2011** The *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* will defer for three years greenhouse gas permitting requirements for carbon dioxide emissions from biomass power incineration, while conducting an “independent scientific analysis” on whether or not biomass incineration is carbon neutral, according to an EPA press release.

“In the coming years we will develop a commonsense approach that protects our environment and encourages the use of clean

# Alternatives

## Solar Hot Water

*John Patterson*, [www.homepower.com/basics/hotwater](http://www.homepower.com/basics/hotwater)

While most people are captivated by the high-tech nature of solar-electric (photovoltaic; PV) systems, in most cases, a solar hot water system will harvest more energy at a substantially lower cost. In fact, compared to PVs, solar hot water (SHW) collectors are more than three times as efficient at producing energy from the sun.



photo: [www.solarpowerwindenergy.org](http://www.solarpowerwindenergy.org)

Investing in an SHW system is a smart solar solution for most homeowners. This proven and reliable technology offers long-term performance with low maintenance. And with federal, state, and utility incentives available, these systems offer a quick payback—in some cases, only four to eight years.

A thoughtfully designed SHW system could provide all, or at least a significant amount, of your household hot water needs for some portion of the year. ❖

energy,” said *EPA* administrator Lisa Jackson.

“*EPA* has sound scientific grounds for challenging the conventional and scientifically unsupported view of biomass as carbon-neutral,” said Meg Sheehan, of *Biomass Accountability Project*. “We trust that the agency is setting a new course that will close the ‘biomass loophole.’”

## TAKE ACTION!

*Write a letter to the editor to your local newspaper expressing concern that biomass power incineration—which has greater smokestack emissions than coal—is being given a three year pass and urging the EPA to protect carbon-storing forests by accounting for CO2 emissions from biomass incinerators.*