BIOMASS BUSTERS

April 2011 Clean energy doesn't come out of a smokestack… *Volume 2, Issue 4*

From the Editor

Rachel Smolker, Co-Managing Editor

The disasters in Japan dominate our attention while people around the world rightly reconsider nuclear power. So if you don't support nukes, coal, or biomass power, then what do you support?

First of all, let's accept that burning every single tree on the continent—not recommended!—could only provide a small fraction of our energy use anyway. Non-smokestack alternatives like solar, wind, and energy efficiency are the winners here.

Don't let the big polluters divide us: our clean energy future doesn't have to be a choice between smokestacks and nukes.

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

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State Lines

Shelton, WA Stops Biomass Incinerator

(source: Dodge, John. The Olympian. Mar. 15, 2011)

March 14, 2011 *ADAGE*—a joint venture with nuclear power producer *Areva* and *Duke Energy*—canceled plans for a 55-megawatt biomass power incinerator for the Port of Shelton, Washington, according to *ADAGE* spokesperson, Tom DePonty.

"This is a victory for the citizens of Mason County," said Beth McBain, spokesperson for the *Concerned Citizens of Mason County*, which has organized rallies, hosted public forums, and educated elected officials over the past year on the impacts of biomass incineration.

Photo: Shawna Whelan, sheltonprogressive.blogspot.com

Two CA Biomass Incinerators Fined

February 15, 2011 Two biomass power incinerators in Chowchilla and El Nido, California were penalized a combined $835,000 for Clean Air Act violations, according to a U.S. *Environmental Protection Agency* release.

Ampersand Chowchilla Biomass and *Merced Power* polluted the air with illegal amounts of carbon monoxide, particulate matter 10, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and ammonia.

Continued on page 3

From the Forest

Report: Northeast Biomass Wood Supplies Exaggerated

Feb. 17, 2011 A report by the *Cary Institute*, "Forest Biomass and Bioenergy: Opportunities and Constraints in the Northeastern United States," suggests that past studies have overestimated the amount of forest available for energy incineration in the northeast, citing 63% of net forest growth already being logged annually.

One estimate disputed by the report is a 2010 study (Volk et al.) claiming available biomass wood supplies in New York to be 4.8 million metric tons per year, while the report suggests only 0.7 to 1 million metric tons are available.

The report claims that even a substantial expansion of biomass incineration could only replace 1.4% of the region's fossil fuels use.

BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month
Samantha Chirillo - Eugene, Oregon

As co-director of *Cascadia's Ecosystem Advocates* (CEA), Samantha Chirillo has been a leading figure challenging biomass power incineration in Oregon and nationally.

Her many contributions include lobbying in Washington, D.C. and extensive research on the economic and environmental impacts of biomass incinerators. Samantha has started a forestry restoration program (forestryrestoration.org) and is organizing public tours of forest biomass logging projects with eco-forester Roy Keene.

Clearcutting the Climate
Mark Robinowitz, ForestClimate.org

Deforestation causes climate change. *ForestClimate.org* is a new website that highlights the climatic impacts of deforestation, including from forest biofuels.

This author was a co-organizer of "Clearcutting the Climate," a conference in January 2008 that brought together forestry scientists and climate experts. *ForestClimate.org* hosts videos of the conference presentations.

Biofuel production plans threaten to worsen the climate crisis. Deforestation disrupts rainfall patterns that are a key factor in the greenhouse effect. Large scale biomass proposals would require enormous amounts of forests to be consumed.

The timber industry is promoting forest biofuels as a replacement for their business losses from the burst of the housing bubble. Electrical utilities like burning trees because they see them as "baseload" power that can augment intermittent renewable sources.

Solutions to protect forests include:

-- selective forestry that maintains canopies, which provides more board feet in the long run
-- cooperatives instead of limited liability corporations to manage and restore tree farms
-- demand reduction for wood and paper products
-- shifting away from endless growth models toward steady state economics, which is appropriate for a round, finite planet
-- mycoremediation: don't burn slash piles, use mushrooms to convert brush piles to soil. ❖

Our Health

Particulate Pollution Increases Heart Attack Risk

(source: Goodman, Brenda. WebMD Health News, Feb. 23, 2011)

A study published in the *Lancet* medical journal finds that exposure to air pollutants, including particulate matter, can increase the risk of heart attacks.

"Air pollution is really a huge problem for communities," said Andrea Baccarelli, MD, associate professor at *Harvard School of Public Health*, who wrote a commentary that accompanied the study.

The study corroborates a scientific statement from the *American Heart Association* concluding that every 10 micrograms per cubic meter increase in particulate concentration contributed to the death of one person per 5 million residents.

"Our work stands as a warning against overlooking the public health relevance of ubiquitous risk factors with moderate or weak strength that have high frequency in the community," said study researcher Tim S. Nawrot, *University of Belgium.*

"The relevance of air pollution as a trigger in populations is of the same magnitude of risk than many other clinically appreciated or recognized triggers" for heart attacks, said Nawrot. ❖

State Lines (continued)

Biomass Opposition Mounts in Rothschild, WI

Residents of Rothschild, Wisconsin are calling on Governor Scott Walker to oppose a 50-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed by *WE Energies* and *Domtar Paper*, claiming a permit issued by the *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources* would put thousands of schoolchildren at risk from toxic air pollution and do so on the backs of taxpayers. The proposed facility would be constructed within 1,200 feet of an elementary school.

"My 18 month old baby will breathe this stuff…because we can't afford to move," said Robert Hughes, a resident of Rothschild. "My neighbor's children play on the swing set that will be under the smokestack."

Biomass Fight in Port St. Joe, FL

March 15, 2011 *Gulf Citizens for Clean Renewable Energy* is mobilizing to stop a 65-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for this historic Gulf Coast community, kicking off their campaign with a public education forum on the negative public health, economic, and environmental impacts of the project.

Northwest Florida Renewable Energy Center hopes to plant monocrops of an invasive weed, Arrundo donax (Giant Cane), to burn in the incinerator, threatening public health and sensitive wetland ecosystems. ❖

Trashing the Climate

"Waste" Incinerators

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)
www.no-burn.org

Waste incinerators:

Poison our environment, bodies, and food supply with toxic chemicals. Incinerators produce a variety of toxic discharges to the air, water and ground that are significant sources of a range of powerful pollutants, including dioxin.

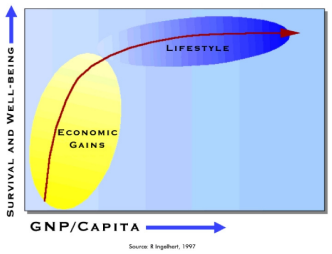
Produce toxic byproducts. In addition to air and water emissions, incinerators create toxic ash or slag that must then be landfilled. This ash contains heavy metals, dioxins, and other pollutants, making it too toxic to reuse, although industry often tries to do so.

Undermine waste prevention and recycling. The use of incinerators feeds a system in which a constant flow of resources needs to be pulled out of the Earth, processed in factories, shipped around the world, and burned in our communities. ❖

Alternatives

Steady State Economy

Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE), www.steadystate.org



The mission of CASSE is to advance the steady state economy, with stabilized population and consumption, as a policy goal with widespread public support. We pursue this mission by:

- educating citizens, organizations, and policy makers on the conflict between economic growth and (1) environmental protection, (2) ecological and economic sustainability, and (3) national security and international stability;
- promoting the steady state economy as a desirable alternative to economic growth;
- studying the means to establish a steady state economy. ❖

D.C. Watch

EPA's "Biogenic" CO2 Regulations

On March 21, 2011, the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* issued draft regulations that would exempt biomass facilities from greenhouse gas regulations for three years, saying it needs more time to determine the climate change impacts. The *EPA* decision was in response to a legal challenge brought by timber industry group, *National Association of Forest Owners*.

There are at least 250 biomass projects currently in the pipeline that would be exempted. Between now and July 2011, when the regulations become final, new and modified biomass projects must comply with the greenhouse gas law, yet corporations in Port Townshend, WA and Rothschild, WI are attempting to bypass this requirement.

EPA offered guidance for determining "BACT" (best available control technology) for reducing CO2 from bioenergy production, giving industry the chance to demonstrate that burning biomass is itself the best available control technology.

TAKE ACTION!

Submit comments by <u>May 5</u> on EPA's "Biogenic" Emissions, demanding that biomass emissions be regulated.

Email: GHGbiogenic@epa.gov (docket ID No. EPA-HE-OAR-2011-0083).