



From the Editor

- by Rachel Smolker, Managing Editor

This month saw the passage of another round of climate negotiations in Durban, South Africa. Activists from GAIA were there with a delegation of waste-pickers, sending the message that recycling is a solution, burning trash is not.

This past month also saw citizens in New York State stop a proposed trash incinerator while a proposed biomass incinerator in Port St. Joe, FL was withdrawn.

But fighting these battles one-by-one is a drain on community resources. We also need to change the policies at national and international levels that are incentivizing more biomass incinerator proposals around the country and the world.

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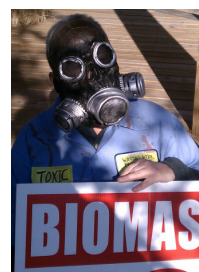
State Lines

One Florida Biomass Proposal Down, One to Go

- by Josh Schlossberg

Nov. 30, 2011: A 55-megawatt biomass power proposal for Port St. Joe, FL has been withdrawn by the developer *Rentech*, as a civil rights complaint was filed with the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* charging the *Florida Department of Environmental Protection* with environmental racism in granting the facility its air permit in July 2011.

The complaint states that the “adverse impacts” of air pollution from the proposed *Northwest Florida Renewable Energy Center* “will fall disparately upon members of the African-American race.” Populations within 2 km of the proposal are 73% African American, compared to 18.7% in Gulf County and 16% in the State of Florida.



(Photo: Melinda Reynolds)

On December 5, biomass opponents handing out literature, holding signs and talking to customers outside of the *Gainesville Regional Utilities*, a public utility developing a 100-megawatt biomass power incinerator for Gainesville, were forced to leave public property by Gainesville City Police.

According to the Gainesville City Code, “acts authorized as an exercise of one's constitutional right to picket or to legally protest” are protected.

Source Watch

Forest Die-off and Biomass in Texas

- by Josh Schlossberg

(source: Jim Forsyth, Reuters, Dec. 20, 2011)

Over half a billion trees have died in Texas due to drought over the past year, according to the *Texas Forest Service*. "In 2011, Texas experienced an exceptional drought, prolonged high winds, and record-setting temperatures," said *Forest Service Sustainable Forestry* chief Burl Carraway.

The Piney Woods in east Texas experienced some of the greatest tree die-off. *American Renewables'* 100-megawatt Nacogdoches biomass power incinerator is under construction in Sacul, Texas, located in the Piney Woods region.

The biomass industry has been working for years to increase public lands logging across the West to fuel an expansion of biomass power incineration.

BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month *Harold Saive – Florida*



Harold Saive's argument against a proposed 100-MW biomass incinerator for Gainesville, FL is mainly fiscal, explaining how businesses will avoid the city because "they will be burdened with higher than average electric rates to help pay off a \$3 to \$4 billion dollar biomass electric bill."

Harold and other Gainesville residents have been leafleting in front of the *Gainesville Public Utility*, informing ratepayers of the economic consequences of a new incinerator. Saive also supports candidates for the City Commission who aim to halt construction with a Power Purchase Agreement contract buy-out.

Harold reminds us that biomass doesn't only threaten health and the environment, but also the economic well-being of taxpayers and ratepayers.

Emerald Ash Borer and Biomass

- by Josh Schlossberg

The emerald ash borer (EAB) continues to spread across the eastern U.S., threatening the future of the tree species, with experts fearing the ash could go the way of the elm over the coming decades. While federal and state agencies and environmental groups have launched education campaigns discouraging the transportation of firewood, what about the spread of the EAB in wood chips bound for biomass energy facilities?



The infamous emerald ash borer
(Photo: emeraldashborer.info)

In October 2004, *The Detroit News* reported an outbreak of the EAB surrounding a biomass power facility in Flint, Michigan. In 2005's "The Survival of EAB in Wood Chips," Dr. David L. Roberts of *Michigan State University Extension* wrote, "this research suggested that the EAB had been transported in ash wood and/or ash chips."

In New York State, wood chips can be transported out of EAB-infested quarantined areas from late fall to early spring, outside of the "flight season" for the winged invasive pest. These wood chips must be accompanied by a "compliance agreement" to burn, treat, or dispose of the chips in a timely manner, according to Sloane Crawford of the *New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*.

Between one-half to two-thirds of the wood fueling Burlington, Vermont's McNeil biomass power incinerator comes from New York. "No facilities in Vermont have a compliance agreement" for accepting wood chips from quarantined areas, said Barbara Burns, of the *Vermont Department of Forests*. However, unlike Vermont, New York does not map biomass logging sites and would not share the location of any of McNeil's sites. McNeil transports wood from a 100-mile radius. 🔍

Our Health

Study: EPA Rules Save \$82 Billion

- by Josh Schlossberg

Nov. 17, 2011: A new study from the *Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)* and *Trust for America's Health (TFAH)* has found that four rules recently proposed or finalized by the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* would significantly reduce air pollution and health care costs related to pollution-caused illness.



The study, "Saving Lives and Reducing Health Care Costs: How Clean Air Rules Benefit the Nation," cites more than \$82 billion in Medicare, Medicaid, and other health care savings for Americans through 2021.

"By lowering air pollution, we can spare millions of Americans from asthma attacks and other respiratory problems, heart attacks and other cardiovascular problems, and a host of other preventable conditions," said Jeff Levi, Executive Director of *TFAH*.



"This report offers more proof that clean air rules that protect people's health are a good investment for America," said *EDF* policy specialist Kusai Merchant. "The Clean Air Act is designed to save lives and promote public health by reducing dangerous air pollution. Our analysis shows that we can save billions of dollars at the same time, because we'll be reducing air pollution-related health care costs."

The four EPA rules referred to include the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, the Utility Mercury and Air Toxics Rule, the Industrial Boiler Rule, and the Cement Kiln Rule. 🔍

State Lines (continued)

NY Dumps Trash as Renewable Energy

- by Josh Schlossberg

Incineration opponents and public health advocates are celebrating waste-to-energy developer *Covanta Energy Corporation's* withdrawal of a petition to the *New York State Public Service Commission (PSC)* to qualify trash incineration as renewable energy.

Over the summer, a grassroots citizen campaign organized by dozens of advocacy groups, including *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)*, resulted in thousands of comments to the PSC to oppose the petition and ensure that trash incineration would not provide clean energy subsidies that New York taxpayers expect to be going to non-smokestack renewable energy projects, such as solar photovoltaics.



Covanta waste-to-energy incinerator in Mauritius
(Photo: themediaguru.blogspot.com)

"A diverse array of New York organizations has been actively organizing against handouts to this industry...The victory of these organizations should inspire people in other states and countries to keep polluters out of programs meant for renewable energy," said a *GAIA* press release.

"We're hopeful that this is the last attempt we'll see by a company trying to masquerade garbage incineration as clean energy," said Michael Seilback, vice president of public policy and communications at the *American Lung Association in New York*. "Clean energy funding must be reserved to promote energy projects that are truly clean and that will enhance the environment and help improve the air we breathe."

State Lines (continued)

Report: Incinerators Burden Taxpayers

Nov. 15, 2011: A report by the *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)* finds that waste-to-energy incinerators are eligible for a range of public funds intended for clean energy sources such as solar and wind power.

“Burning Public Money for Dirty Energy” was released in response to a number of federal and state policy debates about whether incinerators should qualify for renewable energy credits and related subsidies. The report states that incinerators undermine recycling and composting programs, and job growth in those industries.



(Photo: friendsoftheirishenvironment.net)

Some cities that have built incinerators, such as Harrisburg, PA, are going broke because these facilities cost more to construct (per unit of energy) than nuclear power, and cost ten times more to operate than coal power plants per megawatt-hour. 🔍

Eye on D.C.

Biomass “Stimulus” Subsidies Uncertain

- by *Cassandra Zampini*

Leaving the future of biomass in flux, Congress failed to extend Section 1603, an investment credit program for renewable energy companies. Section 1603 is a three-year program that helped reimburse companies like wind, solar, and geothermal, but biomass, posing as a renewable energy, would also benefit from the extension.

“The 1603 program has helped solidify biomass industry growth,” according to president and CEO of the *Biomass Power Association (BPA)*, *Biomass Magazine* reported. The *BPA* joined with the 1603

Beyond Burning

Eliminating “Phantom Load”

- by *Nora Dunn*

www.wisebread.com/green-switch-for-green-savings



(Photo: HGTV)

There are now products on the market to help reduce excessive power consumption. One of them is called the *Green Switch*. Their product was originally designed for the hotel/hospitality industry, which saw an energy cost savings of 25-45% as a result. So the next logical market became the consumer one.

It involves a relatively simple installation of the *Green Switch* in place of one of your outlets. It then sends a wireless signal to other outlets, light switches, and thermostats in your home to turn the power off at the source when activated.

Enviroplug is a UK-based company that also has a line of products similar to the *Green Switch*, which help eliminate phantom power drains. 🔍

Coalition last November to sign a letter to Congress urging the extension of the energy tax incentive that would pay up to 30 percent the cost of construction in lieu of tax credits.

Biomass energy companies hoped Section 1603 would be attached to a payroll bill passed on Dec. 31, 2011, but as Congress continues to delay, it is more likely to show up in a larger tax bill in early 2012.

TAKE ACTION!

Sign the petition asking Congress to let wasteful “stimulus” biomass power subsidies expire at:
<http://www.change.org/petitions/let-biomass-industry-stimulus-subsidies-expire>