



## From the Editor

- by Rachel Smolker, Managing Editor

The absurdity of biomass energy is laid out in this month's lineup of articles. As industry expands plans to export wood pellets across the Atlantic to Europe to burn as supposedly "clean, green, carbon neutral" energy, a biomass opponent is threatened with a lawsuit for referring to the **Seattle Steam** biomass facility as an "incinerator."

Meanwhile, eleven states join together to sue the **Environmental Protection Agency** over failure to enact particulate regulations, even as many of those same states are supporting the construction of more biomass incinerators. While Congress is working to undermine any and all EPA regulation, EPA itself has failed to act upon a mandate to regulate emissions from biomass boilers.

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## State Lines

### Seattle Biomass Developer Threatens to Sue Biomass Opponent

- by Josh Schlossberg

**Feb. 15, 2012:** An attorney for the **Seattle Steam Company** sent a letter to biomass opponent Duff Badgley of Seattle, Wash. forbidding him from making certain public statements—including use of the term "incinerator"—in reference to air pollution threats from the company's existing downtown biomass incinerator and another proposed natural gas facility.



*Seattle Steam Company's biomass incinerator*  
(Photo: biomassmagazine.com)

"The language you have used publicly is a commercial disparagement of Seattle Steam's legitimate business and will cause it harm," reads the letter from Edward W. Pettigrew of **Graham and Dunn** law firm to Badgley, coordinator for **No Biomass Burn** and a member of **Occupy Seattle**. The letter warns that "having advised you of the falsity of your statements, your continued use of them will render you liable for defamation and commercial disparagement."

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, to "incinerate" is to "cause to burn to ashes." "Incinerator" is defined as "a furnace or a container for incinerating waste materials."

# Source Watch

## Europe to Burn More U.S. Forests

- by Rachel Smolker

As if it weren't enough that the U.S. is currently on track towards vastly increasing combustion of all forms of biomass, now we're also supplying Europe's even more massive appetite, especially for wood pellets. For example, Scotland's **Forth Energy** proposes to burn around 3.5 million tons of pellets, mostly imported, in three large biomass incinerators. The developers state their intent to obtain all those pellets largely from the timber industry's "Sustainable Forestry Initiative" certified logging from North America.

Meanwhile, **Drax**, owner/operator of an enormous coal burning facility that provides 7% of electricity in UK, has announced plans to generate 20% of that power from co-fired wood pellets. That would be equivalent to about 800 megawatts of biomass electricity—even larger than **RWE's**

Tilbury station (750 MW). Tilbury is also making the transition to co-fire around 7 million tons per of imported pellets per year.

European facilities prefer port locations for easy access to shipping. Both RWE and Drax are working both sides of the Atlantic to ensure both demand and supply, investing in new pellet producing plants in the U.S., Canada and South America. With biomass being sold as "clean, green, carbon neutral, renewable energy," the market in "climate conscious" Europe is likely to expand, and we will see far more of our forests pelletized and shipped overseas before we even have a chance to burn them here!



*"Fire fuels reduction" logging in Montana*  
(Photo: Matthew Koehler, Wildwest.org)

### **BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month** *Karen Orr – Florida*



**Karen Orr** was among the first Gainesville residents to oppose a 100 megawatt biomass incinerator proposal by **American Renewables**. While her legal appeal of the air permit and a strong, bi-partisan grassroots campaign—in which Karen played a major role educating the public and decision makers—weren't able to stop the facility from being built, they have mandated better air pollution monitoring, oversight, and transparency. The forthcoming information will prove invaluable to biomass opponents elsewhere.

If more incinerators like the one in Gainesville are built across the U.S., Karen predicts that "we'll plunge further into debt, destroy irreplaceable natural resources and send another portion of the biosphere up in smoke."

### **Study: Logging for "Fire Fuels Reduction" Harms Western Forests**

- by Josh Schlossberg

A new **University of Wyoming** study challenges timber and biomass industry efforts to log more western forests on public lands in the name of "forest health." The study, by Mark A. Williams and William L. Baker and published recently in *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, concludes that fuel levels in western dry forests are within historic ranges and that high-severity wildfire is a regular and natural occurrence.

"A set of laws, policies and initiatives that aim to uniformly reduce fuels and fire severity is likely to move many of these forests outside their historical range of variability with adverse effects on biological diversity," says the study. The findings contest timber and biomass industry claims that past fire suppression has caused forests to become "unhealthy," with more logging the best cure. 🔍

# Our Health

## Eleven States Sue EPA on Particulate Matter Regulations

- by Josh Schlossberg

**Feb. 14, 2012:** Eleven states have joined together to sue the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** in Federal District Court in Manhattan, NY, for delays in strengthening air quality standards for particulate matter (PM).

The states, which include California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, want to force the **EPA** to comply with its duty to “timely review and revise as necessary the National Ambient Air Quality Standards [NAAQS] for particulate matter pollution.”



The lawsuit claims the EPA “has harmed and continues to harm the States by delaying the adoption and implementation of more protective fine particulate matter standards that will result in cleaner and healthier air in the States, benefiting the health and welfare of their citizens.”

EPA is required by law to revise air quality standards every five years. The last revision took place in fall of 2006.

“Particulate matter has scientifically demonstrated negative effects on public health and welfare,” says the states’ filing. “The EPA has determined that particulate matter pollution causes thousands of premature deaths and tens of thousands of hospital visits in the United States every year.”

Biomass incinerators generally emit higher levels of particulate matter than facilities burning coal, the dirtiest of fossil fuels. 🔍

# State Lines (continued)

## Is Newspaper Coverage of Biomass Energy Biased?

- by Josh Schlossberg

Two newspapers, the *Gainesville Sun* in Florida and the *Rutland Herald* in Vermont, have recently come under fire for giving readers a biased view of the issue of industrial-scale biomass energy.

“What the *Sun* readers got was a near black out of the news regarding the proposed incinerator combined with a few editorials in favor of it,” said Gainesville resident Karen Orr. “The newspaper’s handling of the bio burner is pretty much the way they handle any local environmental issue that threatens the status quo, threatens the growth and development industry, threatens their advertisers, threatens the power of the local political machine.”

On Feb 23, 2012, **Winstanley**, developers of a 25-35 megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Springfield, Vermont, held a public information meeting for over two hundred local residents. During the Question and Answer segment, Springfield resident Maggie Kelly held up a chart demonstrating the levels of asthma-inducing particulate matter that would be emitted from the proposed biomass facility, asking the developers “Why would the citizens of Springfield allow the construction of a power plant that is dirtier in many respects than a coal plant?”

“Mt. Tom is actually a pretty good coal-firing plant...so it’s not so bad to be compared to Mt. Tom,” responded Winstanley consultant Dale Raczynski. “There’s an existing coal plant out there that has very low emissions. We’re being compared to that. And we have also very low emissions...”

The *Rutland-Herald’s* article did not quote the developer’s admission. Instead, reporter Susan Smallheer wrote that the developer had denied the chart’s data: “Raczynski said coal was not a source of renewable power, and that the woodchip plant’s emissions per megawatt were lower than the Mount Tom plant.”

## State Lines (continued)

### Georgia Communities Face Newest Biomass Proposal

A new citizen group has formed in Jefferson County, Georgia to fight the construction of a 24 megawatt biomass power incinerator that would burn wood and tires, proposed by **North Star Jefferson Renewable Energy**.

**Jefferson County Environmental Defense Initiative (JEDI)**, the newest chapter of **Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL)**, is made up of members of Wadley and Louisville, Georgia.



**No Incinerator!**  
jeffersonedi.com

Up to twenty percent of the fuel for the facility would consist of tire scraps, according to **JEDI's North Star Jefferson Pollution**, a bi-lingual factsheet. "In addition to natural rubber, modern automobile tires are made of styrene-butadiene, polybutadiene, carbon black from petroleum, silica from sand or quartz, zinc oxide, steel, textile fabric and various chemicals." 🔍

## Eye on D.C.

### EPA Drags Feet on Boiler Rule

- by Rachel Smolker

The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** was mandated twelve years ago to regulate emissions of toxins from commercial and industrial boilers (including biomass and waste incinerators) but, unbelievably, has *still* failed to do so. In 2011, EPA finally published standards for "MACT" (maximum available control technology, to control toxins such as mercury, dioxin and particulates) for industrial boilers. But, under pressure from industry and a Congress intent on undermining virtually all environmental protections, arguing they "kill jobs," the EPA

## Beyond Burning

### Muscle Power

- by Eliza Barclay

<http://www.treehugger.com/renewable-energy/portlands-green-microgym-channels-human-exercise-power-into-electricity.html>



We've covered gyms that harvest power from human exertion in Hong Kong, where **California Fitness** has installed cardio machines that help light the facility. Now, a gym in Portland, Oregon is taking the green gym philosophy one step further by incorporating an environmental ethic into the whole business plan. **The Green Microgym** generates as much as 40 percent of its own electricity from solar panels and exercise machines like stationary bikes.

Gym owner Adam Boesel recently demonstrated for the *Los Angeles Times* the Human Dynamo, an exercise machine consisting of four spin bikes attached to a small generator. While pedaling one of the bikes and turning an arm crank that strengthens the upper body, a digital readout showed the amount of watts Boesel's bike produced. The Human Dynamo system can produce 200 watts to 600 watts of energy an hour, depending on whether all four bikes are in use. 🔍

backtracked with reconsideration and an administrative stay on implementation of the rules.

**The Sierra Club** challenged EPA. Now the **D.C. Court of Appeals** has ruled that the delay was "arbitrary" and unlawful. The game isn't over yet: Congress is now considering legislation that would "relieve" industry from the "burden" of EPA regulation.

## TAKE ACTION!

*Want to help get the word out about impacts from biomass incineration? Become an e-distributor of **The Biomass Monitor!** Email us at [thebiomassmonitor@gmail.com](mailto:thebiomassmonitor@gmail.com) for details.*