



BIOMASS BUSTERS



May 2011

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

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From the Editor

Rachel Smolker, Co-Managing Editor

The Sierra Club is asking its members to call for "an end to subsidies for big oil." Great! But what doesn't add up is their insistence that burning biomass is a viable alternative to oil and coal.

The Sierra Club's "Beyond Coal" campaign has advocated for biomass on college campuses. And this week, in a settlement over retirement of Tennessee Valley Authority coal facilities, they offered up conversion to biomass as an option.

We're disappointed that Sierra Club hasn't joined the recent effort of big greens to at least develop some "principles" on biomass. Read on for more!

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

Co-Managing Editor: Meg Sheehan
Co-Managing Editor: Rachel Smolker
Editor & Journalist: Josh Schlossberg

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State Lines

Coal to Biomass Power Stymied in Ohio

March 30, 2011 The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) has revoked FirstEnergy Generation Corporation's renewable energy certification for the conversion of the 312-megawatt Burger facility from coal to woody biomass.

The revocation follows FirstEnergy's March 3 motion to withdraw its application, on the grounds that "biomass is not economically feasible," according to PUCO.



(Photo: Shawna Whelan, sheltonprogressive.blogspot.com)

FL River Group Blasts Biomass Power

March 11, 2011 Apalachicola Riverkeeper, an organization dedicated to protecting the Apalachicola River, Florida's largest river, has come out in opposition to a 55-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Port St. Joe by Rentech, Inc.

"The detrimental impacts on human health and environmental health—particularly air and water quality, make the proposed biomass plant inadvisable," says the group, in a letter to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

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From the Forest

New Study: Forests Store 40% of U.S. Fossil Fuel Carbon Emissions

(source: *ScienceDaily*, Apr. 18, 2011)

A study by the *Complex Systems Research Center, Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, University of New Hampshire*, demonstrates that “forests and other vegetation can sequester as much as 40 percent of the carbon emissions in the lower 48 states,” according to study co-author Beverly Law, Professor in the *Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society, Oregon State University*.

“Our results show that U.S. ecosystems play an important role in slowing down the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere,” the researchers state in the study’s conclusion. The study, published in the journal *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology*, included scientists from 35 institutions.

BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month *Marilyn Blackwell - Florida*



(photo: Lois Swoboda, *The Times*)

Marilyn Blackwell, President of *Help Save the Apalachicola River Group* and member of the *Gulf Citizens for Clean Renewable Energy*, has been a formidable foe of a 65-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Port St. Joe, FL.

Marilyn is particularly troubled that biomass incinerators can be “proposed and supported by our government and governmental agencies invested with the responsibility of leadership and protection of ourselves and our environment.”

Thanks, Marilyn, for your hard work and dedication exposing biomass power for the scam it really is! You’re an inspiration!

Big Greens Develop Biomass Platform

April 4, 2011 Eleven national environmental organizations have released a document entitled “Principles for Sustainable Biomass,” outlining what the groups “believe should govern direct and indirect public incentives for bioenergy.”

Regarding climate change and biomass, the document states that incentives should only be offered to biomass facilities with “lower life-cycle, cumulative and net GHG...within 20 years and also over the longer term, than the energy sources they replace or compete with.” Multiple studies have demonstrated that biomass power facilities cannot meet the above criteria.



Trees for Vermont’s McNeil biomass power incinerator

On air pollution, the document states that facilities receiving incentives should “not contribute to greater air pollution per unit of energy produced than would result from the energy source they replace or compete with.” If biomass is to “compete” with solar and wind, which don’t emit air pollutants, it is unlikely that any form of biomass incineration would meet these criteria.

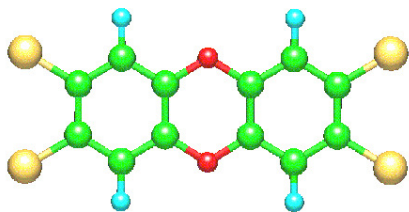
Organizations that have signed on to this platform are: *Environmental Working Group, Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, Geos Institute, Greenpeace USA, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Southern Environmental Law Center, The Wilderness Society, and World Wildlife Fund.* ❖

Our Health

Congress Pushes EPA on Dioxin

April 11, 2011 U.S. Representative Edward Markey and 71 other members of the House of Representatives sent a letter to EPA administrator Lisa Jackson urging the agency to “complete its reassessment of the potential health risks of human exposure to dioxin.”

The letter describes dioxin, a byproduct of combustion, including biomass incineration, as “one of the most toxic chemicals known to man.”



2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin molecule

The letter calls dioxin a “human carcinogen,” citing the *World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer* and the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ National Toxicology Program*.

Also cited is an EPA draft report on the health impacts of dioxin: “The levels of dioxin-like compounds found in the general population may cause a lifetime cancer risk as high as one in 1,000. This is 1,000 times higher than the generally acceptable risk level of one in a million.”

According to a 2005 study by Dana Humphrey, dioxin was found at 85 mg/kg and 130 mg/kg in the fly ash of biomass incinerators in Stratton and Livermore Falls, Maine, respectively.

The letter thanks the EPA for working on the dioxin issue, but states “concern” that the final assessment was not released before the end of 2010, as EPA had intended. ❖

State Lines (continued)

Speakers Boomed at Public Meeting on Biomass in Springfield, MA

April 6, 2011 Citizens speaking in opposition to a proposed biomass power incinerator in Springfield, Massachusetts, including children with asthma, seniors, and two medical doctors, were boomed by members of the IBEW Local 7 (*International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers*) during testimony at a public air permit hearing.

One union source unaffiliated with IBEW who attended the meeting and is undecided on the incinerator says there was also some booing from biomass opponents.

Springfield residents, including *Stop Toxic Incineration*, have been organizing in opposition to the 35-megawatt biomass incinerator proposed by *Palmer Renewable Energy* since 2009, citing threats to public health from air pollution.



Rev. Chris Breedlove and son Elijah protest Jasper incinerator
(Photo: bloomingtonalternative.com/node/10609)

Indiana Anti-Biomass Video Released

March 16, 2011 *Healthy Dubois County* released a public service announcement stating the health concerns of residents in Dubois County, Indiana facing a 75-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Jasper, by *Twisted Oak*.

The video can be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfw58Do628c> or by searching Healthy Dubois County. ❖

Trashing the Climate

Incinerators in Disguise

Energy Justice Network

www.energyjustice.net/incineration



The corporate world knows that incinerators have a bad name. Even the most conventional trash incinerators will often dodge using that title, preferring "Energy-from-Waste," "Waste-to-Energy" or "Trash-to-Steam." In reality, these are really "Waste-OF-Energy" and "Trash-to-Toxic-Ash-and-Toxic-Air-Pollution" facilities.

Here's a list of alternative names for incinerators, processes which include incineration of some sort and incinerator-like processes. Some of these are specific types of incinerators:

Trash-to-Steam; Waste-to-Energy; Fluidized Bed; Gasification; Pyrolysis; Plasma Arc; Thermal Depolymerization; Biomass; Boiler; Co-generation; Combined Heat and Power (CHP); Waste-to-fuel; Gas-to-Liquids; Cellulosic Ethanol. ❖

D.C. Watch

Biomass Opponents Challenge EPA

EPA's proposed ruling that would exempt biomass burning from regulation of CO₂ emissions while they conduct a 3 year long study on how to account for the emissions triggered an avalanche of opposition.

Citizen groups from around the country sent a letter calling for a moratorium on further permitting in the interim—at least until the studies are completed. The exemption will only make it easier for developers to permit the large number of facilities now pending, which could result in huge emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants.

Alternatives

Reducing "Phantom Load"

<http://www.energizeefficiently.coop>



Phantom load is the unintentional siphoning of electricity by electronics, even when they are shut off. Examples include cell phone chargers, laptops and entertainment components.

Phantom loads equate to almost 10% of residential electricity use.

Combating phantom load is easy. All you have to do is turn off your computer, monitors, printers and other devices when they're not in use. If charging units are not being used, be sure to unplug them from your outlets. You may also want to consider power strips that allow you to control which devices draw power directly from the strip itself. ❖

The letter stated that EPA's decision "appears to lack legal or scientific merit, endangers public health, and is fiscally irresponsible."

The letter also insisted that "there does not appear to be any viable legal basis for treating CO₂ emissions from biomass (or any other 'biogenic' sources) differently from other CO₂ emissions."

TAKE ACTION!

Urge your US Senators and Representative to pressure the EPA to abide by sound science and regulate the Carbon Dioxide emissions from biomass incineration.

Go to: www.contactingthecongress.org.