



## From the Editor

*Rachel Smolker & Meg Sheehan, Managing Editors*

Things are moving fast! A major victory in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the city council voted to revoke a permit for a biomass power project. Meanwhile, on Florida's Gulf Coast, plans for a 65 megawatt "gasifier" that will burn "energy crops" has mobilized opposition from environmental justice, water, and health advocates. This is a microcosm of the bigger question: why use the same polluting combustion energy processes that got us in this mess in the first place? Let's put incentives towards non polluting renewables....

The fight is heating up as evidenced by protestors putting their bodies on the line in Oregon and also in Scotland—a clear "NO" to the biomass scam.

**THE BIOMASS MONITOR** is published by Biomass Accountability Project, Biofuelwatch, Energy Justice Network, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, and Save America's Forests.

**Managing Editor: Rachel Smolker**  
**Managing Editor: Meg Sheehan**  
**Editor & Journalist: Josh Schlossberg**

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 State Lines
- 2 Source Watch/Buster of the Month
- 3 Our Health/State Lines (cont.)
- 4 State Lines (cont.)
- 4 D.C. Watch/Take Action!
- 4 Alternatives

## State Lines

### Massachusetts Regulations Deny Taxpayer Subsidies to Biomass Power

**May 2, 2011** Final regulations issued by the *Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources* will severely restrict Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)—a taxpayer and ratepayer funded subsidy under the state Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)—for biomass electricity.



*Massachusetts' Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign*

“Getting biomass electricity out of the RPS is a win-win for taxpayers, ratepayers, the public health and the environment,” said environmental attorney Meg Sheehan, President of *Biomass Accountability Project* and Chair of the *Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign*, which gathered 130,000 voter signatures to remove biomass power from the RPS in 2010.

The regulations will prevent biomass facilities operating at less than 40% efficiency from receiving full RECs (they would receive half credits), with full credits awarded for 60% efficiency or higher. Biomass power facilities currently achieve 20-30% efficiency.

The final regulations differ from the draft regulations by increasing the amount of wood available from timber sales to be used as biomass fuel from 15% to up to 40%.

*Continued on page 3*

# Source Watch

## Study: Forest Bioenergy Emits CO2

(source: *ScienceDaily*, 2011)

A new Canadian study sheds more light on the carbon dioxide emissions from forest biomass incineration. Below are excerpts from “Forest Bioenergy or Forest Carbon? Assessing Trade-offs in Greenhouse Gas Mitigation with Wood-based Fuels,” by Jon McKechnie et. al., Toronto.

“Considering bioenergy in isolation of its impact on forest carbon could inadvertently encourage the transfer of emissions from the energy sector to the forest sector rather than achieve real reductions.

“The use of forest-based bioenergy increases overall emissions for many years and, in the worst-performing scenario (standing tree harvest for ethanol production), does not yield any net climate mitigation benefit over the 100 year

period.

“Forest carbon loss due to harvest residue collection approaches a maximum of ~15MtCO<sub>2</sub>equiv, whereas standing tree harvest for bioenergy results in a carbon loss exceeding 150 MtCO<sub>2</sub>equiv after 100 years.

“Bioenergy production from harvest residues (tree tops and branches) also impacts forest carbon stocks; left uncollected, residues continue to store carbon until released by decomposition or treatment for forest regeneration.”



*Virus infecting switchgrass*  
(Photo: University of Illinois)

## BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month Jana Chicoine – Massachusetts



“Big biomass is going down in flames now that our movement has busted the carbon neutrality myth,” says Jana Chicoine, spokesperson for *Concerned Citizens of Russell*, formed in 2005 to oppose the construction of a 50-megawatt biomass incinerator.

Jana has worked as a volunteer to educate and activate Massachusetts communities against biomass power and on the statewide *Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign* to end subsidies for big biomass, among many other efforts.

Thanks, Jana, for your monumental work to protect our health, climate, and natural world!

## New Virus Infects Biomass Crops

(source: *Futurity.org*, Nov. 15, 2010)

Researchers at *University of Illinois* have discovered a new virus infecting switchgrass, an agricultural crop being considered for bioenergy use. The virus, found in 20-30% of a research plot, may reduce photosynthesis and restrict crop yields.

“Viral diseases are potentially significantly threats to bioenergy crops such as *Miscanthus x giganteus*, energycane, and switchgrass,” says Bright Agindotan, research assistant at *University of Illinois*.

USDA is considering offering "Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) subsidies to biomass developers seeking to plant 200,000 acres of *Miscanthus* across Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. ❖

# Our Health

## Studies: Childhood Environmental Illness Costs \$76.6 Billion Annually

(source: *Environmental News Service*, May 4, 2011)

Studies by scientists at *Mt. Sinai School of Medicine* in New York, published in "Health Affairs," demonstrate that exposure to toxic chemicals and air pollutants is to blame for childhood illness costing \$76.6 billion a year.



(Photo: Linda Greene, Bloomington Alternative)

"Given evidence that current ambient air quality standards remain insufficiently protective for children, ongoing efforts are needed to reduce outdoor air pollutant emissions and their consequences for children's breathing," states study author Leonardo Trasande, MD, associate professor of preventive medicine and pediatrics at *Mt. Sinai*.

The studies call for legislative policy changes including testing of chemicals currently being emitted, better "premarket" evaluation of new chemicals, and "epidemiological monitoring and focused health studies of exposed populations."

"Implementing these proposals would have a significant impact in preventing childhood disease and reducing health costs," said Philip Landrigan, MD, dean for global health, professor and chair of preventive medicine and professor of pediatrics at *Mt. Sinai*. ❖

# State Lines (continued)

## Vermont Biomass Power Incinerator Application Withdrawn

(source: *Bennington Banner*, April 24, 2011)

**April 18, 2011** *Beaver Wood Energy* has withdrawn its application for a certificate of public good from the *Vermont Public Service Board* for a 29.5-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Pownal, VT.

Organized opposition from citizens, including *Bennington-Berkshire Citizens Coalition*, raised public awareness about the negative health, environmental and fiscal impacts of the project.

*Beaver Wood Energy* is moving forward with an identical proposal in Fair Haven, 70 miles north.



Police removing biomass protester locked under vehicle

(Photo: Camilla Mortensen, *Eugene Weekly*)

## First Anti-Biomass Arrests in U.S. in OR

**May 5, 2011** Three arrests were made at the grand opening of *Seneca Sawmill's* 18.8-megawatt biomass power incinerator in Eugene, Oregon. Johannes Pederson used a bicycle lock to lock his neck to the bottom of a running vehicle touring the facility. Pederson and two others were arrested, charged with disorderly conduct, and jailed.

Later that week, seven arrests were made at the site of a proposed biomass power incinerator in Scotland, where biomass opponents blockaded access roads.

## State Lines (cont.)

### Wisconsin Biomass Power Incinerator Approved with Sierra Club Support

(source: *Journal Sentinel*, May 12, 2011)



**May 12, 2011** The *Wisconsin Public Service Commission* (PSC) voted to approve a controversial 50-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed by WE Energies and Domtar Paper, despite sharp criticism by the *Citizens Utility Board*, *Packaging Corporation of America*, and charges from grassroots citizen opposition that the project emits toxic air pollution.

In April, PSC member Lauren Azar stated that the cost of the project was “unacceptably high” and “getting into the ballpark of a nuclear power plant.”

*The Sierra Club* and *Clean Wisconsin* support the construction of the incinerator as the result of a lawsuit settlement challenging permits for the Oak Creek Coal facility. ❖

## D.C. Watch

### Big Biomass Goes to Washington

Washington, D.C. is abuzz with pro-biomass lobbyists. Nary a week goes by without new proposals for more subsidies and supports, and less pesky regulations for biomass incineration.

This past month, Big Biomass and allies petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reconsider and amend National Emission Standards for hazardous air pollutants from boiler “MACT” (maximum achievable control technology) and boiler “GACT” (generally achievable) as well as “CISWI” (commercial and industrial solid waste incinerator) regulations.

## Alternatives

### Spray-On Solar Panels

[www.nextbigfuture.com](http://www.nextbigfuture.com)



(Photo: [www.psfk.com](http://www.psfk.com))

Brian Korgel, a chemist at the *University of Texas* in Austin, is making paintable solar panels. They are focused on 'CIGS'--copper, indium, gallium, selenide--and they make small particles of this inorganic material that they can disperse in a solvent, creating an ink or paint.

"So these devices are 'sandwiches,' where you have the metal contact on the bottom and metal contact on the top to extract the charge out; and the middle part is the part that absorbs out the light," explains Korgel. This paint, made of the CIGS crystals, can be sprayed on plastic, glass and even fabric to create a solar cell. ❖

The EPA, eager not to arouse the ire of industry, had already indicated its pliability—inviting the petition on the basis that certain issues arose after the public comment period or were impractical to comment on.

And, of course, industry won't pass up an opportunity to make polluting cheaper and easier!

## TAKE ACTION!

*Urge your U.S. Senators and Representative to oppose any and all taxpayer subsidies for biomass power incineration.*

*Go to: [www.contactingthecongress.org](http://www.contactingthecongress.org).*