THE BIOMASS MONITOR

October 2011 | Clean energy doesn't come out of a smokestack… | *Volume 2, Issue 10*

From the Editor

By Rachel Smolker, Managing Editor

Fall is in the air, and it feels like a good time for a rally! Massachusetts citizens did just that at their State House in Boston, demanding stronger biomass regulations—and soon!

But it goes both ways; environmentalists are more than a bit annoyed that our President caved to industry claims of "burdensome regulations," directing the EPA to withdraw ozone protection rules. Meanwhile, as forests fall and temperatures rise, an article in *Global Change Biology* advises that "inferred benefits of biogenic emissions over fossil fuel emissions should be reconsidered." No kidding! Let's hope common sense prevails.

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

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State Lines

Berlin, New Hampshire Biomass Power Back from the Dead

-By Josh Schlossberg
(source: Berlin Daily Sun, Barbara Tetreault, Aug. 24, 2011)

Sept. 13, 2011 A 75-megawatt biomass power incinerator proposed for Berlin, New Hampshire that was canceled this summer is once again moving forward with construction. The *Babcock & Wilcox Company* plans to start operations in 2013 according to a company press release, requiring 750,000 green tons of wood per year. The facility will be sited four miles from the eastern edge of the White Mountain National Forest.

New Hampshire's White Mountain National Forest
(Photo: Chris Matera, www.maforests.org)

The proposal appeared terminated after six existing biomass power facilities appealed a decision by the *New Hampshire Public Utilities Committee* in state Supreme Court to approve a 20-year power purchase agreement with the *Public Service of New Hampshire* to buy electricity from the proposed facility. Five of the six biomass companies appealing the decision had their power purchase agreements expire.

A settlement was reached where the five facilities would receive 20-month power purchase agreements.

Source Watch

Study Debunks "Biogenic" CO2 Myth

Below are excerpts from "Biogenic vs. geologic carbon emissions and forest biomass energy production," by John S. Gunn, David J. Ganz, and William S. Keeton, published in Global Change Bioenergy, 2011.

The physics of the greenhouse effect is indifferent as to the origin of the pollutant. Once a molecule of CO2 is in the atmosphere its heating capacity is the same regardless of its source.

If alternatives to fossil fuels include use of forests where C is emitted and resides in the atmosphere for long periods of time (e.g. decades or longer), a reduction of atmospheric concentrations of CO2 (e.g. to 350 ppm; Hansen et al., 2008) will be difficult to achieve and may contribute to some degree of irreversible climate change (Solomon et al., 2009). With this in mind, we must continue to ask ourselves whether we are truly using forests to their greatest atmospheric benefit.

As long as the world continues to experience net loss of forest cover (deforestation) and harvest intensity increases, the residence time period for biogenic C in the atmosphere is likely longer than what is assumed by many scientists. Moreover, most sequestration of this biogenic C in the atmosphere will likely occur beyond the critical timeframe for addressing climate change (e.g. the next 50 years).

Trees for Vermont's McNeil biomass power incinerator

BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month
Mike Ewall – Washington, D.C.

Mike Ewall is the founder and director of *Energy Justice Network*, a national support network for grassroots community groups fighting dirty energy and waste industry facilities.

In 2006, Mike started the Biomass Opponents email discussion list which brings together grassroots anti-biomass activists from around the nation. Having formed networks of grassroots opposition to coal, natural gas, ethanol, and other dirty energy and waste technologies, he works to bring these communities together in a unified campaign for energy justice. A recent graduate of law school, Mike is also working to develop a legal toolbox of local ordinances that can be used to block polluters.

One Big Pile of…

*Below are excerpts from a letter by **Dr. Clement Monroe** on a chicken litter incinerator proposed for Moore County, North Carolina*

This power plant will be located…about 1,500 feet from Drowning Creek and the Moore County line…[and] fueled by burning 35,040 tons of chicken litter on site each year. Data from the N.C. Department of Energy and Natural Resources…estimate that this is enough chicken litter to prudently fertilize 61 square miles, or almost 39,000 acres.

If the entire 35,040 tons were purchased from local growers, every "dropping" of litter produced within the nearest half-million acres would be consumed by the plant. But since it is not likely that the plant will successfully capture 100 percent of all chicken litter produced locally, long-distance chicken litter will have to be trucked to the Drowning Creek site to meet the plant's demands of 8,000 pounds per hour.

Our Health

New Report Compiles Biomass Health Concerns of Medical Professionals

-By Josh Schlossberg

"Second Opinion: The Medical Profession Diagnoses Biomass Incineration," by *Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League's* Therese Vick, compiles testimony from physicians, nurses, and medical health associations "warning of exploding health care costs due to the proliferation of biomass incinerators" in the U.S.

Biomass incinerators "release many pollutants into the air such as nitrogen oxides (NOX), sulfur dioxide (SO2), carbon dioxide (CO2), carbon monoxide (CO), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), heavy metals like lead (Pb), mercury (Hg), arsenic, and particulate matter," according to the report.

The report mentions how "many of those who will be the most adversely affected are medically underserved and already suffer disproportionately from health problems."

Biomass concerns are documented from organizations such as the *American Academy of Family Physicians, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Massachusetts Medical Society, Florida Medical Association, Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition*, and several physicians and nurses, including a pediatrician and an asthma specialist.

Read the full report at: www.wiregrass-ace.org/linked/second-opinion.pdf.

State Lines (continued)

Biomass Industry Webinar Reveals PR Strategies

-By Josh Schlossberg

Aug. 30, 2011 Presenters for *Biomass Thermal Energy Council's* webinar "Public Perceptions of Biomass Energy" reminded biomass developers that public opposition can "kill" biomass projects, advised them to sponsor their own pro-biomass advocacy organizations, and disregard recent science debunking the "carbon neutrality" myth of biomass.

University of Florida researcher Richard Plate acknowledged the difficulty of biomass gaining the same level of public support as solar and wind, since "with biomass we're still burning something."

Eric Kingsley, vice president of the New England-based *Innovative Natural Resource Solutions*, recommended that biomass developers hire an "army of lobbyists, lawyers and PR" and to avoid providing opportunities for those concerned about biomass to communicate to the audience during public hearings. Kingsley also noted that the larger the project, the greater the opposition, in most cases.

Responding to a participant during the Q&A segment, Honey Rand, of the Florida-based *Environmental PR Group*, acknowledged fierce competition between the biomass industry and non-smokestack renewable energy industries, such as solar and wind, for limited renewable energy funding and in the legislative arena.

State Lines (continued)

Massachusetts Coalition Rallies for Stronger Biomass Regulations

Sept. 19, 2011 A statewide coalition of twenty-four environmental, health, and social justice groups rallied at the State House in Boston, Massachusetts to urge Governor Deval Patrick to stand by his administration's 2010 pledge to limit ratepayer–funded incentives for biomass combustion power plants that burn wood for electricity. Rally attendees presented 5,000 new petition signatures to the Governor's staff along with an "environmental ticket" from the "Earth Cop."

Biomass power incinerators "have worse air pollution than coal and don't deserve our clean energy money," said *Biomass Accountability Project*'s Meg Sheehan.

Since 2009, residents from across the state have signed over 135,000 petitions, postcards, letters and emails asking for biomass regulations, with some groups demanding a complete moratorium on state permits for biomass electricity until outstanding questions about health and climate change impacts are answered.

Alternatives

LED vs. CFL Lightbulbs

www.greenoptions.com/t/499/led-lamps-versus-cfls

LED lamps typically use less power (watts) per unit of light generated (lumens). A good LED lamp can generate twice as many lumens per watt as a CFL (50-100+ versus 40-80).

LED lamps last much longer than CFLs, as much as 10x longer (50,000 hours versus 5,000 hours).

LED lamps generate less heat than CFLs.

LED lamps typically are RoHS compliant, meaning that they have no or, at most, negligible amounts of hazardous substances within the scope of that compliance (lead, cadmium, mercury). CFLs, on the other hand, all have 1mg-5mg of mercury (even more in tubular fluorescents).

Eye on D.C.

Obama Nixes NOx Standards

-By Rachel Smolker

Sadly, our "Yes We Can" President Obama caved to big business when he opted earlier this month to direct the *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* to withdraw its Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards. These standards would have required polluters to clean up some of the mess they dump into our lungs, including nitrogen oxides (NOx), a pollutant emitted by combustion facilities like biomass incinerators.

Obama cited the need to "reduce regulatory burdens and uncertainty." Apparently that was a priority over relieving the burden of asthma that hundreds of thousands of children are suffering as a result.

The biomass industry will certainly be delighted, as this will make it easier for them to get their dirty burners, which spew out ozone-producing compounds, permitted.

TAKE ACTION!

Sign your organization (or yourself) on to the National Anti-Biomass Campaign! Go to www.energyjustice.net/platform or send an email to traci@energyjustice.net. Help us spread opposition to biomass incineration across all 50 states so we can change U.S. federal policy!