



BIOMASS BUSTERS



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

July 2010

From the Editors

Meg Sheehan & Josh Schlossberg

This month's **BIOMASS BUSTERS** focuses on the panoply of citizen-led efforts to change the laws that erroneously promote biomass incinerators as "clean and green" and the release of three important scientific studies. On the local level, the anti-biomass burning movement embodies democracy in action, as citizens from Michigan to Massachusetts go directly to voters and elected officials with petitions, proposed local ordinances, and a state-wide ballot question.

In the meantime, leading scientists are providing citizens with the data they need to make their case—June was a watershed month with the issuance of three key reports. Where mainstream environmental groups are failing to act, this grassroots movement is picking up the slack—joining with social justice, public health, and fiscal watchdog groups to change the laws to end public subsidies for toxic biomass incinerators.

For submissions and feedback contact us at biomassbusters@gmail.com.

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

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State Lines

Victory in Michigan

June 27, 2010 Biomass opponents in Traverse City, Michigan are celebrating Traverse City Light and Power's announcement to "shelve" plans to build up to five biomass incinerators.

Monica Evans of *Michigan Citizens for Energy, the Economy and Environment*, one of several groups opposing the incinerators, said: "Burning our forests isn't the answer. The answer is the conservation of energy, the generation of solar and wind power and...to stand up to dirty energy and take back our air, water and soil."



Massachusetts Makes State Ballot

June 23, 2010 Over 120,000 Massachusetts voters signed *Stop Spewing Carbon Campaign's* petition to deny "renewable energy credits"—a form of public subsidy—to biomass and garbage incinerators unless they cut their carbon dioxide emissions. The Campaign met its deadline for the second round of signature collection, qualifying for the statewide ballot in November 2010.

The Massachusetts-wide grassroots movement sprang up in response to five proposed biomass incinerators being promoted as "clean energy."

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From the Forest

Manomet Study Says Biomass CO2 Emissions Worse Than Coal

June 10, 2010 The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources issued the long-awaited study it commissioned in response to pressure from anti-biomass activists. The study, *Biomass Sustainability and Carbon Policy Study*, conducted by Manomet Center for Conservation Studies, confirmed that burning forests for electricity pumps out more carbon dioxide than coal over a several decade time frame.

As a result, the State of Massachusetts is rethinking the Renewable Portfolio Standard conditions that give “renewable energy credits” to biomass incinerators. According to Ian Bowles, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs:

Now that we know electricity from biomass harvested from New England forests is not ‘carbon neutral’ in a time frame that makes sense given our legal mandate to cut greenhouse gas emissions, we need to re-evaluate our incentives for biomass.

“Clearcut Disaster” Report on Biomass

June 16, 2010 The *Environmental Working Group* out of Washington, D.C. estimates 30 million acres of U.S. forests are at risk from biomass incineration. According to *Clearcut Disaster: Carbon Loophole Threatens U.S. Forests*, 4.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide will be released into the atmosphere absent “radical” changes to biomass provisions in federal climate and energy legislation.

Report co-author Mary S. Booth, Ph.D. said:

Climate legislation supporters need to understand that biomass power can’t be carbon neutral in any timeframe meaningful to addressing climate change. Biomass power emissions need to be regulated like any other source of carbon and incentives to use trees as fuel must be removed from climate legislation.



Forests: our climate buffer

“Those who believe wood is the answer need to be honest about how little it’s going to contribute and how much of a mess it’s going to make...” said Stuart L. Pimm, Ph.D., Doris Duke Professor of Conservation Ecology, Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University, who reviewed the report.

“The Green Lie” Report

June 2, 2010 *Global Justice Ecology Project*, *Global Forest Coalition*, and *Biofuelwatch* released the report *Wood-based Bioenergy: The Green Lie*, at the U.N. climate talks in Bonn, Germany, demonstrating that burning forests for energy is accelerating forest destruction in the U.S., Ghana, the Congo, Brazil and West Papua.

Fiu Elisara Mata’ese, Director of the Somoan NGO *Siosiomaga Society* said biomass will have “serious impacts on Indigenous communities, that will lose their forests to legal and illegal logging, as well as conversion to tree plantations.”

“Changing use of land will have global ramifications,” said Simone Lovera, Executive Director of *Global Forest Coalition*. “Wood-based bioenergy is an absolutely false solution to climate change.” ❖

Our Health

Biomass and Particulate Matter

Environmental Protection Agency

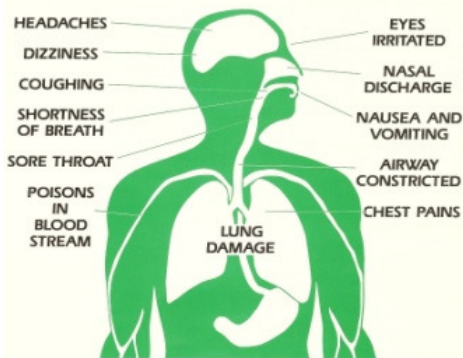
<http://www.epa.gov/oar/particlepollution/health.html>

Particle pollution—especially fine particles—contains microscopic solids or liquid droplets that are so small that they can get deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems.

The size of particles is directly linked to their potential for causing health problems. Small particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter pose the greatest problems, because they can get deep into your lungs, and some may even get into your bloodstream. Particles of concern include...“fine particles” (such as those found in smoke and haze), which are 2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller.

And with every breath we take, polluted air contributes to Respiratory Problems

HERE ARE SOME SYMPTOMS



Graphic: <http://www.westernhealthinc.com/>

Numerous scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure to a variety of problems, including:

- increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing, or difficulty breathing;
- decreased lung function;
- aggravated asthma;
- development of chronic bronchitis
- nonfatal heart attacks; and
- premature death in people with heart or lung disease

State Lines (cont.)

Detroit Marches Against Incineration

June 26, 2010 Environmental justice advocates from across the U.S., the Teamsters Union, and neighborhood residents marched together to the world’s largest waste incinerator (owned by Covanta) to demand its closure. The action occurred on the last day of the U.S. Social Forum.

Detroit City Councilor Joanne Watson linked the health problems of pollution to racism. “There is absolutely no level of toxicity that’s acceptable,” she said, and urged “Zero tolerance for poison and contamination in our communities.”



Zero Waste Detroit and allies
Photo: Orin Langelle/GJEP

Greenfield, MA Voters Sink Biomass

June 8, 2010 When Greenfield city officials made a closed-door deal with a biomass incinerator company to sell sewer water for the facility’s cooling towers, citizens researched the City’s charter and discovered they could call for an election to overturn the vote.

Concerned Citizens of Franklin County crafted three ballot questions that would undo the deal between the City of Greenfield and the incinerator company. 35% of voters turned out and voted 5 to 1 to overturn the City’s decision.

Janet Sinclair from *Concerned Citizens of Franklin County* said the Greenfield vote is an “indication of how people feel about the [biomass] issue when they have the opportunity to have facts presented to them...” ❖

Trashing the Climate

Plug Pulled on Biggest Tire Incinerator

Mike Ewall, Energy Justice Network

In 2008, *Energy Justice Network* and the *DelCo Alliance for Environmental Justice* stopped plans by Koach Energy for the world's largest tire incinerator, a type that would burn 1,200 to 2,400 tons a day of tires and plastics into petroleum using a gasification/pyrolysis process, after testing a pilot scale version.

After kicking it out of Chester City, Pennsylvania, the company teamed up with Rutgers University's so-called "EcoComplex" in New Jersey.



Energy Justice Network just learned that the experimental pilot project lost \$1 million last year, couldn't find investors, was still polluting, and that the pyrolysis side of the project failed.

The test equipment will be sold for scrap. ❖

Legislation Watch

Wyden Act Shreds Forests

In December of 2009, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced the *Oregon Eastside Forests Restoration, Old Growth Protection and Jobs Act*, crafted in closed-door meetings with the Senator and a few hand-picked, pro-biomass, conservation organizations, including *Defenders of Wildlife*, *Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center*, *Oregon Wild* and *Pacific Rivers Council*.

Forester Roy Keene, who has thirty years of forest restoration experience in Oregon, said the purpose of the Act is to "deliver far greater

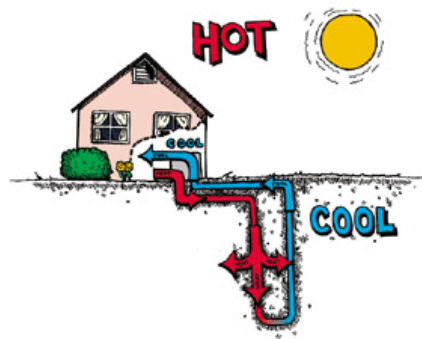
Solutions

Ground Source Heat Pumps

International Ground Source Heat Pump Association

<http://www.igshpa.okstate.edu/>

Ground source heat pumps are electrically powered systems that tap the stored energy of the greatest solar collector in existence: the earth. These systems use the earth's relatively constant temperature to provide heating, cooling, and hot water for homes and commercial buildings.



The Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency have both endorsed ground source heat pump systems as among the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly heating, cooling, and water heating systems available. Their flexible design requirements make them a good choice for schools, high-rises, government buildings, apartments, and restaurants—almost any commercial property. ❖

volumes of valuable ponderosa pine and chip logs for biomass" and would "triple the...logged acreage across millions of acres for the next twenty years."

Former chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Jack Ward Thomas, wrote that the bill is "flawed, inappropriate, less than fully informed and has implications for the management of the entire national forest system."

TAKE ACTION!

Sign your organization on to a letter to Senator Wyden demanding he rescind Senate Bill 2895. Contact Carl Ross at carl@saveamericasforests.org, (202) 544-9219, or go to <http://eco-advocates.org>.