



## From the Editor

- by Rachel Smolker, Managing Editor

If there were ever a David and Goliath battle, opposing bioenergy is it. With the harms caused by oil extraction, fracking for natural gas, and nuclear power ever more visible and dire, we in the anti-biomass movement find ourselves struggling to be heard.

Meanwhile, the convergence of interests and power backing bioenergy is daunting: big agribusiness, forestry, biotechnology and transport, as well as the U.S. military are all behind bioenergy. Even the Obama administration is cheerleading.

Still, there's no question that our voices will be heard, and industry is worried about that. Thanks to all our allies!

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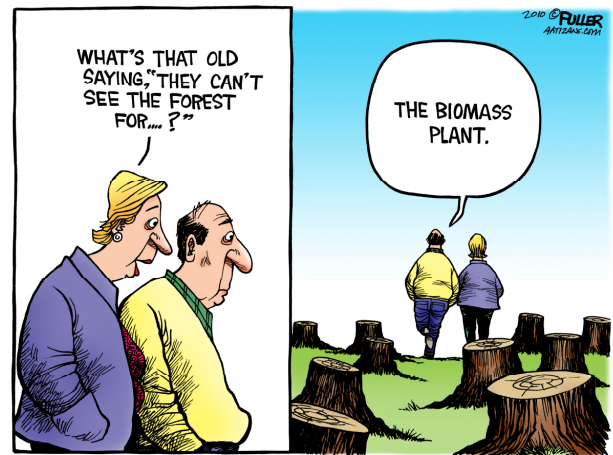
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## State Lines

### Gainesville, FL Group Files Lawsuit to Scrap Biomass Power Contract

- by Josh Schlossberg

**April 4, 2012:** Gainesville Citizens CARE has filed a lawsuit in Florida Circuit Court to annul a \$3 billion Power Purchase Agreement contract negotiated by **Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU)** and approved by the **Gainesville City Council** for a 100 megawatt biomass incinerator proposed by **American Renewables**.



(Cartoon: Jake Fuller, Artizans.com)

The lawsuit asks that “the contract negotiated behind closed doors in violation of the Sunshine Law be declared void and without legal effect,” according to a Gainesville Citizens CARE press release. The Sunshine Law is a 1967 Florida statute requiring government transparency.

Changes allegedly made in secret, without public disclosure, include an extension of the contract from 20 to 30 years, a cost increase of 25%, and the removal of a “back door out clause” that would’ve allowed “the contract to be cancelled after its last regulatory approval and before the commencement of construction.”

# Source Watch

## Study: Industrial-Scale Biomass Energy Not Sustainable

- by Josh Schlossberg

According to a study published in *Global Change Biology* last month, “large-scale bioenergy from additional harvest of forest biomass is neither sustainable nor greenhouse gas neutral.” The authors dismiss biomass industry claims of “carbon neutrality” and argue that increased logging “requires decades to centuries to be paid back by fossil fuel substitution, if paid back at all.”

The study determines that a European Union mandate to provide 20% of Europe’s energy from biomass would commandeer the equivalent of “60–70% of the global increment in woody biomass.” Expansion of biomass energy would “export substantial amounts of nutrients, further

depleting the soil nutrient stock,” especially when removing “nutrient-rich biomass residues (slash) and root stocks.” Required fertilization would further increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Findings predict an increase in burning whole trees, including from “previously unmanaged forests,” citing a rise in the price of wood chips in relation to saw logs—reaching a staggering 60–70% of the price of saw logs in Germany.



## Bill Would Sell Public Lands to Industry

- by Julia Waite

**March 16, 2012:** Rep. Chaffetz (R-UT) introduced a bill into the House of Representatives to initiate a sell off of federally owned lands in the western U.S. Colorado, Wyoming and Montana are among the ten states implicated under H.R. 1126, the “Disposal of Excess Federal Lands Act of 2011,” which calls upon the Secretary of the Interior to direct the sale of 3.3 million acres of land, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, one-quarter of which are forested.

This relinquishment of federally owned land presents itself as a valuable opportunity for the timber and biomass industries. A major limiting factor for biofuels in becoming an economically viable producer of electricity has been the availability of wood. “Obtaining a consistent supply of woody biomass from federal lands is one of the primary impediments to developing a biomass utilization sector,” according to biomass proponent **Sustainable Northwest**.

In 2003, the so-called Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) was passed into law with a priority purpose to “reduce wildfire risks to communities.” Under the guise of fire protection, the government has essentially been priming its federally owned lands for exploitation by the biomass industry.

### BIOMASS BUSTER of the Month *Toby Thaler - Washington*



After living in Seattle for nearly four decades, **Toby Thaler** wasn’t about to sit back and let the biomass industry run roughshod all over his home state of Washington. Instead, Toby has become a force of biomass resistance through his work on an appeal of the **Nippon** biomass incinerator proposed for Port Angeles, organizing lobbying efforts in D.C., on the steering committee of the national **Anti-Biomass Campaign** and elsewhere.

On top of impacts to human health and the climate, Toby believes that biomass energy “is not a solution to the need to consume less energy.” Instead of burning our forests for energy, Toby advises that “our civilization needs to learn how to function within the limits to growth” and that “delay makes the solutions harder.”

# Our Health

## Florida Medical Doctor: Biomass “Dangerous” to Elderly and Asthmatics

- by Josh Schlossberg

*Below are excerpts from a letter by Marc J. Yacht, MD of Hudson, Florida to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection objecting to Texas-based Florida Power Development’s proposal to build a biomass power incinerator in Brooksville, Florida.*

Biomass plants are unhealthy and specifically dangerous for many of our elderly citizens suffering from pulmonary disease and those suffering from asthma.

Particulate air pollution is increased through the burning of biomass exacerbating upper respiratory illness that can be catastrophic for those with chronic lung disease. Many of our elderly and young asthmatics are particularly sensitive to air pollutants generated by such a facility.



Further increased is the release of nitrous oxides creating ozone a highly reactive oxidant gas. Ozone reacts in pulmonary airways that may result in chest pain, shortness of breath, cough, and wheezing; increased susceptibility to infection, increased asthma attacks, increased asthma medication use, and more visits to Emergency rooms for respiratory disease.

Incineration is the most toxic technology converting materials into more noxious gaseous, liquid, and solid forms. These plants tend to be costly to communities, the electricity generated is expensive, and they provide a disincentive to minimizing the production of materials that are too toxic or complex to be cost-effectively or safely recycled.

# State Lines (continued)

## Are Vermont’s Enviro Groups Shifting Stances on Biomass Energy?

- by Josh Schlossberg

Where do the Green Mountain State’s two biggest environmental groups, **Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG)** and **Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC)**, stand on burning forests for energy?

According to a 2012 policy statement, **Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG)** “supports providing significant incentives to the most efficient uses of biomass (heating), and tiering incentives for other biomass uses based on their efficiency, with the most inefficient uses (large, electric-only or electric-led biomass plants) receiving no incentives.”

Contradicting this statement, however, is VPIRG’s 2009 publication, *Repowering Vermont*, written by James Moore. The report, still in circulation today, advocates for an expansion of almost 100 megawatts of biomass electricity in the state by 2032.

**Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC)** has urged the state government to “support biomass energy projects and policies that clearly demonstrate net greenhouse gas benefits because carbon neutrality cannot be assumed for all types of woody biomass energy.” VNRC is also “intervening in PSB [Public Service Board] proceedings to address concerns related to large scale projects” in Vermont, such as biomass power proposals in Fair Haven and Springfield.

In 2007, VNRC had a somewhat different view of the “carbon neutrality” of biomass energy. “Biomass offers us a carbon-free, renewable, and local energy source. That’s right in step with VNRC’s traditional values,” said Elizabeth Courtney, VNRC’s executive director in *Diverging In The Woods: Facing Market Forces, Will Vermont Choose Sustainability?* by Will Lindner, published in VNRC’s *Vermont Environmental Report*.

## State Lines (continued)

### Biomass Politics on Washington's Olympic Peninsula

- by Josh Schlossberg

(Source: Arwyn Rice and Paul Gottlieb, *Peninsula Daily News*)

Local politics are abuzz with biomass on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, where Port Angeles and Port Townsend residents are facing two biomass incinerator proposals from **Nippon Paper Industries** and **Port Townsend Paper Corp.**

Over the last several weeks, the former Mayor of Port Townsend warned residents of the health impacts from burning biomass, and the Port Angeles and Sequim City Councils—Sequim is fifteen miles downwind of the proposed Port Angeles incinerator—canceled a previously scheduled public forum to discuss biomass concerns.

"It looks like our city governments can't cope when research on the impacts of burning biomass leapfrog ahead of rules, regulations and laws...especially where the influences of timber interests loom large," said Diana Somerville, spokesperson for the seven groups that have filed suit against the Port Angeles incinerator. 🔍

## Eye on D.C.

### Obama Drops \$35 Million on Biofuels

- by Rachel Smolker

The Obama administration has given yet another thumbs up to bioenergy, announcing \$35 million in funding for research on feedstock production, bio-products development and biofuels development analysis.

The **Biomass Research and Development Initiative (BRDI)**, a joint program with Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Agriculture, will oversee the grants. The BRDI initiative was mandated by the Biomass Research and Development Act back in 2000, which put in

## Beyond Burning

### Energy Conservation vs. Efficiency

- Homeowner's & Trades Resource Center



Efficiency is the ability of a physical item to use less energy, water or other resource to perform the same function. Conservation is a behavior that results in the use of less energy, water or gas. For example, turning the lights off when you leave the room, turning the water off while brushing your teeth, turning down the thermostat during winter, turning your car off when you run into the store for just a minute, etc., is conserving a resource.

A mechanical object cannot conserve; it is simply built to use energy or other resource required more efficiently. For example, a light bulb cannot conserve electricity; it is either on or it is off, it is up to a human being to turn it off when it is not in use. A CFL or LED bulb that uses less energy than an incandescent bulb is an example of an energy efficient item. Adding insulation, air sealing, duct sealing work, etc., is simply increasing the efficiency of a structure to help reduce the cooling and heating loads, it does not conserve anything.

place a Biomass Research and Development Board and Technical Advisory Committee.

Obama's enthusiasm for bio-everything is further indicated by a September 2011 announcement that the administration will develop a "National Bioeconomy Blueprint" to "harness biological research innovations to address challenges in health, food, energy and the environment."

## TAKE ACTION!

Sign the online petition to encourage Washington State government to enact a moratorium on biomass incinerators: <http://www.change.org/petitions/city-of-port-angeles-port-townsend-county-and-state-government-a-moratorium-on-constructionoperations-of-biomass-incineratorsboilers>