

Anti-Biomass Incineration/Forest Protection Campaign

FOREST IMPACTS OF BIOMASS INCINERATION

- Forests are one of the world's best climate buffers, storing and sequestering carbon dioxide while regulating regional climate and rainfall patterns. Forests also provide clean air and water, flood and erosion control, fish and wildlife, and recreation.
- Logging the world's forests is the #2 human cause of climate change after the burning of fossil fuels (*NASA*), accounting for 25-30% of human caused carbon emissions (*UN Food & Agriculture Organization*).
- Only 80% of the world's primary forests remain with less than 5% remaining in the US (*World Resources Institute*). Forest cover is declining in all six New England states (*Harvard Forest*).
- Current demands of lumber, paper pulp and firewood for home heating cause serious impacts to U.S. forests. Vastly increased burning of forests in electricity-generating incinerators, which Congress is now promoting, will greatly increase logging and degradation of public and private US forests.
- Wood incinerators burn a 100 year old tree in less than a minute, a truckload of woodchips in 20 minutes (*John Irving, Burlington Electric, VT*), and an acre of forests in an hour (*Harold Garabadian, Agency of Nat. Resources, VT*).
- 461 biomass incinerators currently exist in the US with 175 proposed or expanding (*Energy Justice Network*).
- Biomass proponents insist they will only use "waste" wood as feedstocks. According to RISI, the leading source of forecasts and analysis for the global forest products industry, "the perceived overabundance of 'waste wood' in the nation's forests is simply not there." (*RISI*). Expansion of forest biomass incineration for electricity will require drastically expanded logging in U.S. forests.
- Whole trees are commonly used in existing wood incinerators, and are likely to be the main fuel in the new biomass incinerators (*Buckeye Forest Council, Environmental Working Group*)

- The timber and incinerator industry claim that there will be “excess” forest materials available to burn in incinerators. The timber industry has successfully manipulated the fear of fire to get Congress to pass laws causing logging on tens of millions of acres of national forests, with the false claim that logging reduces forest fires. However, **logging throughout forests does not reduce fires, but in fact increases fires** (*Dr. Arthur Partridge*).

In fact, fire is a natural and essential process in western forests, enriching soils and encouraging new growth. Massive new logging in our national forests in order to supply wood incinerators will greatly degrade our forests.

- Jack Cohen, research scientist at the Fire Sciences Laboratory in the Forest Service’s Rocky Mountain Research station claims:

home ignitability, rather than wildland fuels, is the principal cause of home losses during wildland/urban interface fires. Key items are flammable roofing materials and the presence of burnable vegetation immediately adjacent to homes. Intense flame fronts (or crown fires) will not ignite wooden walls at distances greater than 40 meters or 130 feet.

- Climate and weather (particularly drought, low humidity and high winds), rather than fuels, are the main drivers of large wildfires. (*A.L. Westerling*).

Climate change is making western summers hotter and drier, which will likely lead to an increase in wildfires.

“Fire fuels thinning” for wildfire prevention is often ineffective as large fires are driven by climate rather than fuels. Additionally, “thinning” would need to occur every ten years to keep fuels low, and the initial regrowth of brush is more flammable than the forest it has replaced.

Thinning a forest can exacerbate wildfire by opening a forest to sunlight and wind, heating and drying the forest and allowing flames to spread quicker (*George Wuerthner*).

- The **most effective, least expensive, and simplest action** we can take to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change in the US is to preserve intact forest ecosystems, let degraded forests recover, and designate certain areas for low-impact, responsible, selective forestry only (*Save America’s Forests*).