



# BIOMASS BUSTERS



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

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## From the Editors

Meg Sheehan & Josh Schlossberg

Massachusetts is leading another revolution—this time against toxic, climate-busting biomass incineration. The state government is now restricting the type of biomass incinerators that can get taxpayer and ratepayer subsidies, with final regulations expected by December 2010.

Meanwhile, opposition to biomass from the medical community continues to mount. Large amounts of nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, dioxin, lead, and mercury are released by the burning of biomass; these pollutants are known to cause cancer, heart disease, and asthma.

As subsidies continue to be doled out across the nation for these polluting incinerators, it's great to see a reality check here in Massachusetts. For more victories against biomass, please read on!

*For submissions, feedback or to sign up for email version contact us at [biomassbusters@gmail.com](mailto:biomassbusters@gmail.com).*

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

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## State Lines

### Anti-Biomass Lawsuit in Washington

**October 6, 2010** A coalition of seven environmental organizations filed an appeal with the city of Port Angeles, Washington challenging a city-approved Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and shoreline management permit granted to Nippon Paper Industries for a proposed 20-megawatt biomass incinerator.

The groups appealing the incinerator contest the EIS on the grounds that it neither requires Nippon Paper to meter the amount of water they would draw from the Elwha River for cooling the facility nor does it properly address air pollution.



### NAACP Resists Florida Biomass

The *Alachua County Branch* of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) sent a letter to Gainesville, Florida Mayor Pegeen Hanrahan and City Commissioners on March 1, 2010 asking them to “withdraw your support for this costly and risky biomass plant,” in reference to a 100-megawatt incinerator proposed by the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center, LLC.

Dr. Michael V. Bowie, President of the *Alachua County Branch*, cited “serious questions” regarding the proposed project, noting that “African Americans constitute a large percentage of the lower income population in Gainesville.”

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# From the Forest

## Study: Heavy Metals in Biomass Ash

A 1996 study from Graz, Austria demonstrates that ash from burning biomass can contain heavy metals such as cadmium: “Besides nutrients, the ash also contains heavy metals.”

The study, *From waste to raw material—the route from biomass to wood ash for cadmium and other heavy metals*, by M. Narodoslowsky and I. Obernberger of the Institute for Chemical Engineering at Graz University of Technology, discusses the use of biomass ash as agricultural fertilizer, stating that “cadmium poses a special risk to the use of wood ash in agriculture.”

The McNeil generating station, a 50-megawatt biomass incinerator in Burlington, Vermont, distributes its ash to local farmers for use as fertilizer, including organic farms.

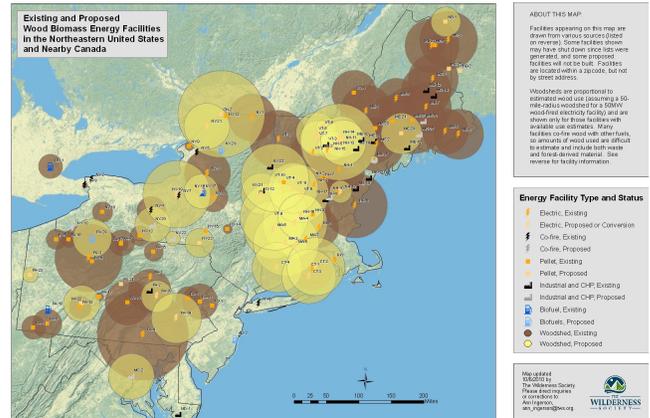
## Biomass Expansion in Northeast

The Wilderness Society has published a map depicting existing and proposed biomass facilities in the northeastern U.S., including stand-alone electricity facilities, biomass co-firing with coal, combined heat and power (CHP), biofuels production, and pellet manufacturing.

The Wilderness Society does not oppose all biomass incineration:

The Wilderness Society advocates for public policy that ensures that biomass energy facilities are sized and fueled properly, and meet efficiency and forest sustainability standards, so that permitted facilities provide a net benefit to climate and the environment over time. Not all biomass is “carbon neutral,” and a proliferation of facilities drawing from the same woodshed is clearly a threat to sustainability and net climate benefit. The purpose of this map is not to single out any individual plant, but to demonstrate that the accumulated effects of existing and planned facilities are potentially negative.

The circles represent the wood sourcing area.



<http://wilderness.org/content/protecting-our-forests-biomass-sources-northeast>

## Worst Year for Western Timber

The *Western Wood Products Association* announced that in 2009 western states produced the lowest amount of timber since records began in the late 1940's, approximately 10.39 billion board feet.

Less logging means that less of an already limited supply of “slash” or other forest residue will be available for use in existing and proposed biomass incinerators.

Dave Schott, spokesperson for the *Southern Oregon Timber Industry Association*, believes that 2010 totals might be even lower, blaming a poor housing market and struggling economy. Lower timber demand has resulted in lower prices, with the wholesale value of 2009 timber production estimated at \$2.69 billion—down 28% from 2008.

“In light of the those timber harvest numbers for Oregon,” said Shannon Wilson, co-director of *Cascadia's Ecosystem Advocates* and an ex-mill worker, “corrupt state and federal agencies as well as Oregon's larger environmental groups grease the wheels for the timber syndicate to continue to decimate Oregon's forests, poison the land and rivers with herbicides, and drive salmon runs into extinction.”

Roy Keene, forester of 30 years based in Eugene, Oregon said “at some point in the very near future [wood] chip prices could exceed saw log prices.” Keene said to expect “lots of trees to get logged and burned as fuel or ground into pellets.” ❖

# Our Health

## Latino Groups Support Air Protection

**September 29, 2010** A coalition of 19 Latino groups representing over 5 million Latino citizens across the U.S., including *Voces Verdes*, *National Hispanic Medical Association*, and *National Latino Coalition on Climate Change*, sent a letter to President Obama and the U.S. Congress asking them to “oppose any legislation that would block or delay the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from enforcing the Clean Air Act.”



The letter states that “an estimated 66 percent of U.S. Latinos—25.6 million people—live in areas that do not meet the federal government’s air quality standards.” The letter also claims that global warming will negatively affect many Latino communities “by exacerbating problems with ground level ozone formation, a primary contributor to asthma and other respiratory disease.”

The letter references an EPA finding from 2009 that carbon dioxide emissions “endanger the public health and welfare” and should be covered under the Clean Air Act.

The letter states that “global warming pollution is dangerous to our health and environment,” asserting that the EPA is legally mandated to enforce “standards under the Clean Air Act to control carbon pollution from cars, power plants, and other industrial sources.” ❖

# State Lines (continued)

## Biomass Incineration Threatens Georgia

Wiregrass Power, LLC has proposed a 40-megawatt biomass incinerator for Valdosta, Georgia which would emit 247 tons of nitrogen oxide, 247 tons of sulfur dioxide, 60 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOC’s), and 135 tons of particulates, according to Michael Noll of *Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy*. The facility will also require 750,000 gallons of water a day for cooling and will burn sludge from a water treatment facility, as well as wood chips.

Two elementary schools are located within 1 mile of the proposed incinerator site while a third school is located less than 2 miles away.



## Biomass Opponents Receive Award

**October 2, 2010** The *Stop Spewing Carbon (SSC) Campaign* [above] was presented with the John O’Connor Grassroots Leadership Award by the Massachusetts chapter of *Clean Water Action*. The Massachusetts-based coalition of health, environmental and fiscal accountability organizations formed in 2009 to oppose five biomass incinerators proposed for the state.

*SSC Campaign* Chair Meg Sheehan said biomass incineration is “one of Massachusetts’ greatest threats to human health, the climate, our environment, and our clean energy future.” She said that *SSC’s* accomplishments were made possible “through the hard work, dedication and support of dozens of volunteer organizers across Massachusetts.” ❖

# Trashing the Climate

## Global Day of Action Against Waste and Incineration

Ananda Tan, *Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives*

It's time to celebrate GAIA's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and organize for the *Global Day of Action against Waste and Incineration* on December 1, 2010.



This year's working theme will be **"GAIA: Celebrating 10 years of community action for Zero Waste solutions,"** which aims to highlight community solutions to address wasteful and end-of-pipe dirty technologies. We have been fighting together for a decade now—even longer for many of us—and we have seen this movement grow and become stronger and diverse. Let us use this strength to inspire and empower more people around the globe!

To join, please email [anne \[at\] no-burn.org](mailto:anne@no-burn.org) or [gigie \[at\] no-burn.org](mailto:gigie@no-burn.org). ❖

## Legislation Watch

### Renewable Electricity Promotion Act

Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) plans to introduce the *Renewable Electricity Promotion Act of 2010 (S. 3813)* into the Senate, requiring utilities to source 15% of their electricity from sources such as wind, solar, and geothermal, along with provisions encouraging biomass incineration.

The *Anti-Biomass Incineration & Forest Protection Campaign*, a national coalition of health, climate, forest, environmental justice, and clean energy groups is circulating a sign on letter

# Solutions

## The Transition Movement

[www.transitionus.org](http://www.transitionus.org)



*The Transition Movement* is a vibrant, grassroots movement that seeks to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis. It represents one of the most promising ways of engaging people in strengthening their communities against the effects of these challenges, resulting in a life that is more abundant, fulfilling, equitable and socially connected.

*Transition U.S.* is a nonprofit organization that provides inspiration, encouragement, support, networking, and training for *Transition Initiatives* across the United States. We are working in close partnership with the *Transition Network*, a UK based organization that supports the international *Transition Movement* as a whole. ❖

to Senator Bingaman stating that “defining the combustion of biomass, solid waste and landfill gas as ‘renewable energy’ will threaten air quality, public health, and the environment, and fail to address the climate crisis.”

The letter also states that “further subsidizing combustion only perpetuates fundamentally mistaken policies and undermines our transition to a clean energy future.”

## TAKE ACTION!

**Contact Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) at (202) 224-5521 and urge him to remove all biomass provisions from the Renewable Electricity Promotion Act of 2010 (S. 3813).**