

June 30, 2013

Chairman Ron Wyden
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
405 Dirksen Senate Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

CC: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate

Speaker John Boehner, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi,
Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member Henry Waxman
Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Ed Markey
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Ron Wyden and Members of Congress:

In a January 30, 2013 letter to President Obama, you and fifteen of your colleagues in the U.S. Senate wrote that “pollution can cause asthma attacks, heart and lung disease, cancer, damage to the reproductive system, strokes, and premature death.”¹ You said that you “stand ready to work with [the President] to use available tools to provide stronger safeguards that will address dangerous air pollution.”

With your clearly stated intentions on the public record, we, the undersigned, are writing to ask you to expand upon your laudable efforts on behalf of the health and well-being of all Americans by ending your support for the expansion of polluting industrial-scale biomass energy.

While receiving many of the same taxpayer subsidies as *genuinely clean* energy sources which emit no pollutants, such as solar and wind, electricity-generating biomass facilities emit large quantities of health-damaging air pollution. For example, the latest U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data shows that biomass incinerators emit 98% as much nitrogen oxides (NOx) as burning bituminous coal and higher levels of the most dangerous particulate matter (PM_{2.5}, including ultrafine and nano particulates). These very small particulates are increasingly implicated in a variety of diseases due to their ability to bypass respiratory defenses, penetrate deep into the lungs, and deliver toxic chemicals directly into the bloodstream and body tissues.²

³ In addition, biomass burning emits large quantities of carbon monoxide, a variety of hazardous

¹ Letter to President Obama, January 30, 2013

http://www.epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=8c28a6d7-dd23-2eb8-740c-b861cc5c7dd3&Designation=Majority

² eGRID 2012 Database, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2009 data released on 5/10/2012.

<http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/egrid/>

³ U.S. EPA WebFIRE Application. <http://cfpub.epa.gov/webfire/>

volatile organic compounds, and even dioxin, among other toxic chemicals. These are all implicated in a variety of diseases.

The health impacts of emissions from biomass burning were the subject of a Congressional briefing on September 25, 2012. A scientist and medical doctors presented detailed information on ultrafine particulate matter, lung disease in children, and dioxin poisoning.⁴ A large and increasing number of public health organizations and medical professionals have publicly stated their concern with and/or opposition to the construction of new biomass power facilities, including the American Lung Association, American Lung Association in Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, and New England, American Academy of Family Physicians (Pioneer Valley, Massachusetts), Capital Medical Society (Tallahassee, Florida), Florida Medical Association, Lane County Health Advisory Committee (Oregon), Massachusetts Medical Society, Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition, North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Washington State Medical Association.⁵

Pollution-emitting biomass facilities—like other forms of incineration—are not clean energy and will cause more disease and drive up already soaring health care costs for Americans. Children, the elderly, people suffering from asthma and other preexisting medical conditions, and low-income residents and communities of color (who often live in close proximity to these facilities) are especially vulnerable. Many biomass incinerators concentrate pollution in urban areas around vulnerable populations year-round. In winter, some areas experience an inversion layer, an adverse condition that concentrates the air pollution even more.

One example from your jurisdiction concerns a recent inversion phenomenon in January 2013 when Klamath Falls and Lakeview, Oregon had among the highest PM_{2.5} particulate pollution in the U.S. for several consecutive days.⁶ Yet each of these communities is facing a new incinerator, a new and continuous source of particulate pollution. On Thursday, April 25, 2013, EPA Director of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs, Region 10 and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air Quality Administrator Andy Ginsberg were in Lakeview to discuss the community's participation in the EPA's new PM Advance Program.⁷⁸

⁴ "Human Health Effects of Biomass Incinerators," September 25, 2012. <http://saveamericasforests.org/Forests%20-%20Incinerators%20-%20Biomass/Documents/Briefing/>

⁵ "Second Opinion: The Medical Profession Diagnoses Biomass Incineration," Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, September 6, 2011. <http://www.bredl.org/pdf3/SecondOpinion.pdf>

⁶ Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Air Quality Index, <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aqi/index.aspx>

⁷ Memorandum, Stephen D. Page, Director, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, January 17, 2013, <http://www.epa.gov/ozoneadvance/pdfs/20130107PMmemo-guidance.pdf>

⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "PM Advance Program," <http://www.deq.state.or.us/aqi/index.aspx>

Stating that Lakeview has met nonattainment status but is not yet formally designated under this Program, Lakeview, by shouldering the burden with its own PM reduction plan, will avoid designation and pollution restriction under the Clean Air Act for yet another EPA planning cycle (2014-2019). Without this restriction, the proposed incinerator, an additional and continuous source of pollution, can move forward, a scenario familiar to communities affected by the biomass exemption to the GHG New Source Review Program.

We, the undersigned, ask that you and the entire Congress please:

- 1) stop classifying polluting and human disease-causing biomass incinerators as “clean,” “renewable” or “sustainable” energy and
- 2) end subsidies for polluting industrial-scale biomass facilities

Please redirect your well-intentioned efforts to creating more jobs in the conservation, efficiency, solar, wind, and energy storage industries that will not be a burden on our health care systems and will protect public health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Anti-Biomass Incineration Campaign, Denny Haldeman, Tennessee

Biofuelwatch, Rachel Smolker, Vermont

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Louis A. Zeller, North Carolina

Buckeye Forest Council, Nathan Johnson, Ohio

Community Health Watch, Margie Strite, California

Dogwood Alliance, Scot Quaranda, North Carolina

Energy Justice Network, Mike Ewall, D.C.

Energy Justice Network, Samantha Chirillo, Oregon

Energy Justice Network, Josh Schlossberg, Vermont

Florida League of Conservation Voters, Joy Towles Ezell, Florida

Heartwood Forest Council, Ernie Reed, Virginia

Save America’s Forests, Carl Ross, D.C.

Save Our Rural Oregon, Paul Fouch, Oregon

Alachua County Green Party, Michael Canney, Florida

Arise for Social Justice, Michaelann Bewsee, Massachusetts

Arkansas Clean Air Network, David Orr, Arkansas

Beyond Toxics, Lisa Arkin, Oregon

Cascadia Forest Defenders, David Piccioni, Oregon

Center for Biological Diversity, Kevin P. Bundy, California

Center for Community, Democracy and Ecology, Reede Stockton, California

Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Barbara Warren, New York

Citizens for Healthy and Safe Environment, Shirley Jones, Georgia

Concerned Citizens of Franklin County, Janet Sinclair, Massachusetts

Concerned Citizens of Perryville, Linda Graff, Missouri

Croatan Earth First!, North Carolina

Don't Waste Arizona, Stephen Brittle, Arizona

Ecology Party of Florida, Cara Campbell, Florida

EcoAdvocates Northwest, Shannon Wilson, Oregon

Environmental Alliance of North Florida, Rick Causey, Florida

Environmental Protection Information Center, Andrew Orahoske, California

Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network, John Evans, Oregon

Florida Environmental Justice Network, Karen Orr, Florida

Floridians Against Incinerators in Disguise, Susie Caplowe, Florida

Forest Web, Cristina Hubbard, Oregon

Friends of the Earth, Ben Schreiber, D.C.

Friends of the Fenholloway River, Rebecca Edwards, Florida

Friends of the Siberian Forests, Andrey Laletin, Russia

Gainesville Citizens Care, Jo Beaty, Florida

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Monica Wilson, California

Global Justice Ecology Project, Anne Petermann, New York

Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community, David Beebe, Alaska

Green Party of Florida, Steve Showen, Florida

Help Our Polluted Environment, Ted Ezell, Florida

Help Save the Apalachicola River, Marilyn Blackwell, Florida

Incinerator Free Brown County, John Filcher, Wisconsin

Industrial Workers of the World (Lane County), Scott Fife, Oregon

Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Neil Seldman, D.C.

Kentucky Resources Council, Tom Fitzgerald, Kentucky

Lane Community Bill of Rights, Cindy Biles, Oregon

Lehigh Valley Gas Truth, Julie Edgar, Pennsylvania

Market Air Quality Campaign, Mike Smith, Washington

Massachusetts Forest Watch, Chris Matera, Massachusetts

Michigan Citizens for Energy, the Economy, and the Environment, Monica Evans, Michigan

Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Kathleen Logan Smith, Missouri

Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment, Jeff Ordower, Missouri

Native Forest Council, Tim Hermach, Oregon

No Biomass Burn, Duff Badgley, Washington

North Springfield Action Group, Robert F. Kischko, P.E., Vermont

Occupy Inter-Faith Eugene/Springfield, Patricia S. Hine, Oregon

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Janet Keating, West Virginia

Olympic Environmental Council, Darlene Schanfald, Washington

Our Forests, Roy Keene, Oregon

Palm Beach County Environmental Coalition, Panagioti Tsolkas, Florida

People for Clean Mountains, Kevin Glenn, North Carolina

Physicians for Social Responsibility, Lynn Ringenberg, M.D., Florida

Port Townsend Citizen Watchdogs, Sally Shumaker, Washington

PT AirWatchers, Gretchen Brewer, Washington

Rising Tide Vermont, Keith Brunner, Vermont

Saving Our Air Resource, Robert Hughes, Wisconsin

Sequoia ForestKeeper, Ara Marderosian, California

Southern Albany County Reporting Environmental Dangers, Jim Travers, New York

Standing Together to Outlaw Pesticides, Eron King, Oregon

Stop Gypsum Biomass, John Schelter, Colorado

Stop Toxic Incineration in Springfield, Jesse Lederman, Massachusetts

Texas Campaign for the Environment, Robin Schneider, Texas

Texas Drought Project, Alyssa Burgin, Texas

The Canary Coalition, Avram Friedman, North Carolina

The Enviro Show, Don Ogden, Massachusetts

Toxics Action Center, Sylvia Broude, Massachusetts

Waukesha County Environmental Action League, Charlene Lemoine, Wisconsin

WildEarth Guardians, Bryan Bird, New Mexico

Wild Virginia, Misty Boos, Virginia

WildWest Institute, Matthew Koehler, Montana

Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy, Michael Noll, Georgia

World Temperate Rainforest Network, Pat Rasmussen, Washington

Yadkin Riverkeeper, Dean Naujoks, North Carolina