

Pennsylvania Forestry Association Biomass Energy Policy Statement

June, 2013

PFA Mission: Promote forest stewardship to ensure forest sustainability to benefit all Pennsylvanians, now and into the future.

Development of Biomass Energy Programs:

Bioenergy refers to all energy derived from biological materials, including solid (heat, power) and liquid (fuels) applications. Bioenergy can be derived from agricultural feed-stocks, residual materials from forestry, agriculture and livestock waste, or dedicated energy crops such as switchgrass, quick growing trees, and algae. Biomass production in the United States increased over 30 percent from 2004 to 2009, with most renewable energy gains made in the ethanol industry. In the last three years the production of wood pellets for energy has increased to record levels based on a strong export market to Europe. Almost all of the liquid fuel production has to date been from agricultural products, but significant gains are being made in various processes to make fuels from cellulosic feed-stocks.

The greatest gains in woody biomass use are taking place in the southeastern U.S. and New England. The present uses are for wood pellet production and power, or combined heat and power (CHP). In Pennsylvania we have seen growth in the use of woody biomass for heat production at various schools and institutions such as hospitals. Ethanol and biodiesel have been produced on a smaller scale from corn and soy beans. There are new cellulosic plants for liquid fuels going into operation in other states, primarily in the southeastern U.S.

Between 2004 and 2009, biomass production in the U.S. increased by over 30 percent, with most renewable energy gains made in the ethanol industry. The clean energy sector set a record in May 2009, when all combined renewable energy sources contributed 11.5 percent of all energy produced in the U.S., surpassing nuclear power.

The Policy of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association:

1. We are members of the National 25 x "25" Committee. The goal of this organization is for the United States to be producing 25 percent of all of our energy through renewable resources by the year 2025, while we continue to produce abundant, safe and affordable food, feed and fiber. We support the development of all renewables; including biomass, wind, solar, geothermal and hydro power.
2. We are a member of the Pennsylvania Biomass Energy Association. The PFA goal within this organization is to promote sustainable utilization of our forest resource.
3. We support biomass energy production to improve the economies of rural communities; to improve our National security; and doing this in a sustainable manner that protects our wildlife and water resources.

Focus on Pennsylvania Forests:

1. In Pennsylvania, we have an abundance of low-grade wood for which there is presently a limited market. This exists as both forest residue from saw timber sales; and from overstocked stands in need of thinning to promote growth on quality stems for high end furniture production.
2. Thinning can capture the volume lost to natural thinning and can improve overall forest health by increasing growth on the best trees.
3. We believe that all harvesting must be done under the guidance of a Forest Stewardship / Forest Management Plan that is prepared by and approved by a professional forester.
4. Forest Management Plans must consider all forest resource values and uses to support the sustainable production of biomass, wildlife, water and recreation.
5. PFA recommends that State, County, and Local permitting agencies/authorities for wood using mills require as part of the permitting process for any new wood using facility that data be presented showing that the combined (existing and new) annual wood drain (cutting) will not exceed annual wood growth in the potential drain area (wood procurement working circle).
6. We support the use of energy plantations of trees and various grasses on abandoned or low quality farm lands. However, we do not support the conversion of quality farm lands capable of food production, to energy plantations.
7. We do support the use of reclaimed strip mine lands for energy production with a priority for tree plantations.
8. We encourage the planting of riparian buffers to promote both water quality and energy production.
9. We support combined heat and power facilities to obtain the highest level of energy efficiency.
10. We support energy efficiency by energy consumers to reduce the demand for energy.