



Burning Trees for Electricity Will Accelerate Climate Change and Destroy Southern Forests

Power companies in the United States and Europe are expanding their use of trees (woody biomass) as an energy source to replace fossil fuels. The wood is chipped or turned into pellets and burned in power plants just the same as coal. To meet this increasing demand, a new, rapidly growing industry of manufacturing facilities has emerged across the southeastern United States to supply wood fuel to electric utilities on both sides of the Atlantic. In the Southeast, the massive fuel needs of these energy companies could double logging rates and significantly increase carbon emissions, contributing to climate change at a time when we need to actively cut our carbon pollution. As important, local forest ecosystems and watersheds could be devastated.

OUR FORESTS AREN'T FUEL

Americans know how valuable our forests are, in the Southeast and across the country. In addition to providing one of the best tools to fight climate change, forests filter water, give us open spaces to hunt, fish, and camp and provide habitat to a multitude of species. If big power plants turn increasingly to whole trees for their fuel, it will intensify pressure to overharvest our forests, threatening our climate, wildlife, land and water. Large power companies and pellet manufacturers must commit to a wood-sourcing policy that excludes whole trees and move to true renewables.



Over the past year alone, wood pellet exports from southeastern ports increased 70%, making the Southern United States the largest exporter of wood pellets in the world. This growth is expected to continue: numerous additional manufacturing and export facilities are planned, particularly in the South.

Burning Trees for Energy Increases Carbon Pollution for Decades

Power companies and pellet manufacturers promote biomass energy as a way to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change. They argue that if you cut down a tree and burn it, as long as you plant another in its place everything comes up carbon neutral. Until recently, energy from biomass was considered an important part of a robust portfolio of renewable energy sources—alongside technologies like solar, wind and geothermal—to address climate change. However, advances in science and accounting for pollution from different types of woody biomass have clarified that burning whole trees to produce electricity actually increases carbon emissions compared with fossil fuels for many decades.

Investments in Bioenergy Shift Focus Away from Low-Carbon Energy Solutions

We need utility companies to invest in expanding energy efficiency and clean, renewable and truly low-carbon energy sources, such as solar, wind and geothermal power. Investing in wood-burning power plants distracts from these efforts and erodes hard-won victories for forest conservation.



Southern pine plantations are a major source of biomass for wood pellet manufacturers. Unlike natural forests, which are home to a rich and diverse array of plants and animals, tree plantations provide little biodiversity. In the early 1950s there were approximately 2 million acres of planted pine in the South.

That figure has skyrocketed to more than 40 million acres of pine plantations today. According to the United States Forest Service, if current trends continue, pine plantations will likely increase by 60 percent—to 54 million acres by 2040—and make up more than one-quarter of all regional woodlands, an area the size of North Carolina and South Carolina combined.

Dogwood Alliance and Our Allies in North America and Europe Are Leading the Fight

In June 2013, Dogwood Alliance and NRDC launched the Our Forests Aren't Fuel campaign to shine a spotlight on the destructive impact faulty European climate policy is having on the forests, communities and climate of the Southern US. Joined by over 75 organizations across the South and an extensive network of NGOs in Europe, we are working to convince policy-makers, investors, and large utilities to end the rush to burn and instead focus on investing in true renewable energy, like wind and solar.

Dogwood Alliance has been the driving force of change among industries reliant on the resources of Southern forests since 1996. Our work has transformed the forest products sector to modern forestry practices that incorporate the entire value that forests provide, i.e. ecosystem services like clean drinking water, clean air, and carbon sequestration, not just raw material. And as a result we've also increased protection for millions of acres of Southern forests. We've targeted and collaborated with leading companies that have the ability to influence an entire marketplace. We've traveled all the way through the supply chain to the back roads of the South to work with the landowners whose forests fuel the industry. Using Southern forests for bioenergy is a new problem that threatens the progress made to date in protecting Southern forests. Join the fight to protect Southern forests!



www.dogwoodalliance.org

Dogwood Alliance, PO Box 7645, Asheville, NC, 28802

For More Information contact: Adam Macon, Campaign Director adam@dogwoodalliance.org or Scot Quaranda, Communications Director scot@dogwoodalliance.org