

The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Chairman Bingaman:

We are writing to urge you to modify the definition of biomass in the House passed Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 so that Congress does not stymie progress on producing renewable energy from forest biomass.

The House passed energy bill defines renewable biomass in three places (Title II and twice in Title XIV) such that biomass from federal forests is not allowed to be used as feedstock for renewable fuels, and biomass from many non-federal forests are not allowed to be as feedstock for renewable electricity. Eliminating this massive source of feedstock will hamper efforts to move from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. It will also reduce opportunities for new technology energy in counties with forests, especially in western and southern states. That will negatively impact new job creation, and could affect the price of electricity and fuel in those parts of the nation.

Moreover, the value of the biomass is relatively higher with the potential for use as an energy feedstock, which results in forests (public and private) not being overstocked. Overstocked forests contribute to more intensive wildfires and reduce habitat for wildlife.

In June 2007, the Senate passed energy bill used a definition of biomass that did not have the flaws identified above. We urge you to use that definition instead as the Senate prepares to vote on the energy bill. We greatly appreciate your assistance in this regard.

Evergreen Forest County Group
National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition
National Association of Counties
Rural Public Lands County Council
Society of American Foresters
Hardwood Federation
National Association of State Foresters