



February 12, 2008

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pete Domenici,
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: *Renewable Biomass* definition

Dear Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Domenici:

We wish to express both our concern with the definition enacted in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110—140), and our support for the efforts of this committee to amend that definition in a manner best suited to meeting our nation's energy needs, as well as the equally important conservation and restoration needs of our public and private forests.

The existing definition in Title II artificially excludes from consideration as "renewable biomass" wood fiber generated from federal public lands, and from private lands other than those "actively managed" as plantations. This definition is needlessly narrow, and will serve to frustrate not only renewable energy production, but other forest management goals across the nation.

At a time when considerable legislative and agency efforts are being made to address global climate change, wildfire severity, and renewable energy production, it is regrettable that a definition would be promulgated that would equally obstruct all of these goals. The current definition will interfere with the ability to remove non-merchantable, small-diameter trees from our public lands, both as renewable fuels, and as a means for addressing the increasingly devastating wildfires we are experiencing. Any notion of climate change mitigation and adaptation of existing forests to changing environmental conditions will require the maximum in management flexibility for both public and private forests, and hampering that management with an unscientific and ill-conceived renewable biomass definition is unacceptable. Finally, the definition's arbitrary limits on qualifying private forest lands can only exacerbate the land-use conversion pressures faced by our smaller, private working forest landowners.

We commend your committee's current efforts to craft a more scientifically, socially, and ecologically appropriate definition that will balance the pressing management needs across our nation's forests, while at the same time safeguarding the important environmental and societal values provided by our forested lands. We would urge serious consideration of the bipartisan definitional approach taken by Representative Herseht-Sandlin (H.R. 5236) as a template for Senate action. And as always, we remain poised to assist with these efforts.

Respectfully,

Tom Thompson
President, SAF

