

Hi Everyone:

There has been a great deal going on, and I wanted to share some of the good things with all of you who have been so faithful and done so much to protect public health, the Westfield River, the town of Russell, and the Commonwealth from bad biomass policies.

NEW VIDEO ON YOUTUBE MADE BY FOLKS IN MASSACHUSETTS, VERMONT, AND FLORIDA:

Friends in Florida have helped our cause by putting a video on YouTube that details the effects that a large-scale biomass power plant can have on a neighborhood. The raw footage from this video was created when people from Russell, Westfield, and Boston went to McNeil Station in Burlington, Vermont to find out firsthand the truth about what happens when these projects are sited in neighborhoods. A friend in Boston did some initial editing & graphics. The videos are so compelling that they recently helped friends in Florida to defeat a biomass power plant proposed in a neighborhood there. They in turn were so moved by the plight of the folks in Vermont that they edited the video, put it on YouTube, and have started a Relocation Fund to help move the low-income Vermont residents away from the miseries of living next to McNeil Station:

Biomess Part 1 of 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iREYS12Gy_o

Biomess Part 2 of 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-X_2YVJiu8&feature=related

MASSACHUSETTS FOREST WATCH and INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING with CHANNEL 5 BOSTON:

We have been working for some time now with Chris Matera of Massachusetts Forest Watch. Chris has compiled a 50-page report detailing the state's harvesting of timber and biomass fuel in our public parks and forests. You can watch the investigative report here:

<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/video/18868966/index.html>

MY FIRST OP-ED:

Also, I have had my first Op-Ed published. On March 3 the Greenfield Recorder printed a piece I had written for their feature, "My Turn."

OCEAN RIVERS INSTITUTE SIGN-ON LETTER TO PROTECT WESTFIELD RIVER has about 4,000 SIGNATURES, add yours today:

Rob Moir of the Ocean Rivers Institute has put an excellently written, detailed, science-based sign-on letter on the Ocean Rivers Institute web site, and they already about 4,000 people have signed on. You can read the letter and add your name if you wish at this link:

<https://ori.wufoo.com/forms/save-the-westfield-river-essential-salmon-habitat/>

There is lots more to say, but I'll save it for later. For now, I just want to thank every one of you who has taken action, given, contacted decision-makers, prayed, yelled, attended meetings and hearings, written letters to the editors of newspapers, put bumper stickers on your cars, and every other little thing that has added up to a tremendous grassroots effort over the past four years.

Best - Jana

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Please consider contributing to CCR

Look before you leap

Russell's experience with biomass pitch

I have read with interest the recent articles in The Recorder surrounding the proposed biomass power plant in Greenfield. Our group, Concerned Citizens of Russell (CCR), has been the main citizens' advocacy organization working on this issue in western Massachusetts for the past four years. Residents of Franklin County surely will want to look before they leap into the brave new era of incinerating chemically contaminated fuels and whole trees as "clean energy."

We all agree that we need to wean off fossil fuels. Taking advantage of the energy crisis, sophisticated timber, waste and incineration industry front men are arguing very convincingly for new, large-scale "biomass" power plants to be built in western Massachusetts and, of course, they insist that they must be built as quickly as possible.

They say these plants will minimize our collective impacts on the earth's climate through renewable, efficient, safe, clean, sustainable, carbon neutral and economically sound power plants. The truth is that large-scale biomass power plants fulfill none of these criteria, yet vested interests keep repeating these fallacies as they try to deftly manipulate the planning process away from the common good.

It is really important to look at industry cycles and goals here. Waste industry and incineration giants are desperately looking for places to burn trash, and the timber industry, having devastated the northwest and Maine, is prepping Massachusetts' public and private lands for a major plundering. Any community that commits to a large-scale biomass power plant may well find itself dwarfed by these giants and engaged in a futile struggle to uphold the best interests of the community.

The startling fact is that the majority of new "clean" energy generation planned for our valley would come from large-scale biomass power plants incinerating chemically contaminated fuels in neighborhoods. Biomass power plants are internationally known as "incinerators-in-disguise" because they are dismally inefficient power producers and their dual purpose is both waste disposal and energy production. The energy production is in the 20 percent range and the waste is not really disposed but merely transferred into the landfill in the sky for all of us to breathe.

It is already quite difficult to breathe in the Pioneer Valley, as we have hundreds of thousands of asthmatic residents here. Every year, there are numerous days when the government warns us the air is "bad" and we should stay indoors, take shallow breaths, avoid exercise and so on. Air pollution is not merely a nuisance or inconvenience, either. Randall Swisher, president of the American Wind Energy Association, pointed out in the year 2000 that every single year, more Americans die from air pollution than from automobile accidents. American Lung Association of Massachusetts CEO Jeff Seyler has written that the biomass plant proposed in Russell "is a potential threat to thousands of Massa-

Jana Chicoine My Turn



chusetts' residents and requires the full attention of all Massachusetts' citizens." Asthma, cancer, respiratory

disease, cardiac arrest — these are daily taking dearly loved people from their families. This is the everyday cost of incineration.

Large-scale biomass burning also threatens our forests. Most biomass plants in New England burn whole trees as part of their fuel. Many knowledgeable foresters and environmentalists are questioning how our state's forests can feed the gargantuan appetite of these plants for very long. A 50-megawatt plant would burn about a ton of fuel every minute. Four such plants are proposed in the state at present.

These facilities also burn chemically contaminated fuels. Construction and demolition debris, waste pallets which may have received chemical treatment for import and fuel cubes made from hospital trash are all allowed as fuel in biomass power plants. When these fuels are burned, dioxins, mercury, carcinogens and hundreds of other toxins are spread across our air, waterways, playgrounds, yards and agricultural lands.

We have also found that neighbors of these facilities experience multiple impacts such as awful noise, choking dust, air pollution and litter from fuel trucks and other nuisances. These effects can ultimately depress property values and change municipal economics and the demographics of local neighborhoods.

Our group has been deeply involved in the effort to develop renewable energy in the valley for four years, and we have seen the interests of citizens undermined at every turn as the timber, waste and incineration industries close in on their goals. Their focus is building new incinerators as quickly as possible, securing unfettered access to our precious public water resources, accessing the "biomass fuel" stored in our publicly owned state forests and parks and passing "clean energy" laws with valuable subsidies so they can be paid to burn whole trees and chemically contaminated fuels with inferior technology, minimal testing and little oversight.

There are internationally proven alternative models and an international movement with a much better way. Conservation and efficiency, along with Non-Incineration/Zero Waste policies are proven to produce healthier economies and many more jobs than incineration. Now doesn't that sound nice?

Our CCR T-shirt slogan asks, "Is it Biomass, or is it Buy-A-Mess?" Greenfield needs to answer that question now.

Jana Chicoine is spokeswoman for the Concerned Citizens of Russell and Owner of Northampton Fine Arts. She can be reached at janachicoine@verizon.net or through the Web site www.concernedcitizensofrussell.org