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Manomet Study Affirms Carbon Benefits of Renewable Forest Biomass

Forest biomass energy recycles atmospheric carbon. Fossil fuel energy doesn't.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – David P. Tenny, President and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners, offered the following comments on the *Biomass Sustainability and Carbon Policy Study* released yesterday by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences and the concurrent statement released by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources:

NAFO appreciates the effort by Manomet to analyze the carbon impacts of using forest biomass for energy. The Manomet study adds to the significant body of science affirming that, over time, the sustainable use of renewable forest biomass for energy does not increase carbon in the atmosphere and has significant carbon benefits over fossil fuels because it recycles atmospheric carbon. These facts have been recognized throughout the world for a long time and are a cornerstone of conventional renewable energy policy.

In contrast, the conclusions drawn from this study by Massachusetts confuse rather than inform public policy by suggesting that fossil fuel energy that increases atmospheric carbon over the long term is preferable to renewable forest biomass energy that recycles and reduces atmospheric carbon.

Manomet observes that, although forest biomass releases carbon when it is used for energy, it is unique because, 'unlike fossil fuels, forests can grow back and recapture (or sequester) CO₂ from the atmosphere. Over time, through accelerated forest growth, the carbon debt can be 'paid off'. . . and the use of wood for energy then becomes increasingly beneficial for greenhouse gas mitigation. As a result, using wood for energy can lead to lower atmospheric greenhouse gas levels than fossil fuels.'

Forest carbon stocks in the U.S. have been increasing annually for over 50 years notwithstanding our nation's growing reliance on forests for a variety of uses, including energy. In contrast, fossil fuels have steadily added carbon to the atmosphere during this timeframe.

[MORE]

Page 2 - Manomet Study Affirms Carbon Benefits of Renewable Forest Biomass

Modern forestry uses low value forest material for energy while using mature trees to produce products, like homes and furniture, that store carbon for long periods. This combination increases and accelerates the carbon benefits to the atmosphere when forests regrow, making the comparison to fossil fuels even more dramatic.

Massachusetts' determination that fossil fuels are preferable over renewable biomass for energy is a policy decision unique to the state, not a broad scientific conclusion. The prevailing science is clear on the carbon benefits of producing energy from sustainable forest biomass as compared to fossil fuels. Over the long term our nation will be better served by increasing its use of an energy source, like forest biomass, that recycles atmospheric carbon than burning more fossil fuels that don't.

The carbon benefits and sustainability of energy from renewable forest biomass is documented in recent white papers available on NAFO's website at www.nafoalliance.org/studies.

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NAFO is an organization of private forest owners committed to advancing federal policies that promote the economic and environmental values of privately-owned forests at the national level. NAFO membership encompasses more than 75 million acres of private forestland in 47 states. To see the economic impact of America's working forests, visit www.nafoalliance.org/economic-impact-report.