

Forest Biomass Working Group Communication Plan

Background

Senate Bill 1072, passed by the 2005 Oregon Legislature, directed the Oregon Department of Forestry to lead a collaborative effort to enhance the utilization of forest biomass for energy and other uses in the state. The Forest Biomass Working Group (FBWG) was established to bring various state agencies and other entities together to work on achieving the directive of SB 1072 and move toward the following vision for Oregon.

Vision

Oregon has healthy forests, a greater degree of energy independence, improved air quality and expanded economic development through market-based solutions encouraging the development of sustainable energy and biofuels industries that utilize forest biomass as a raw material.

Mission/Goals

The Forest Biomass Working Group has a charter in development that recognizes the goals of Coordinate, Educate, and Direct & Promote. This Communication Plan focuses on the Educate goal as outlined in the FBWG Charter.

“Educate the public, government, environmental and business interests on the opportunities and benefits of forest biomass as a source of renewable energy through integrated statewide education and consensus building.

- Inform state and federal policymakers of opportunities that will encourage forest biomass energy in Oregon and nationally.
- Increase public understanding that biomass utilization is an effective tool for restoration of forests and rural economic development.
- Establish and maintain a central clearinghouse via web pages and other tools for information on forest biomass energy and biofuels production.
- Support strategies that provide for habitat needs, clean air and water, while meeting social and economic needs.”

Key messages

1. Biomass utilization could help reduce fuel loads in Oregon's forests. Many of these lands are at risk of uncharacteristically intense wildfires. In the recent past, numerous large fires have negatively impacted forest health as well as taking lives and destroying property. It holds promise as one element in a multi-faceted approach that will be necessary to fully address this large-scale problem.

2. Fuel treatment has been underway for several years on forest lands in Oregon, but it is limited in scope due to high cost. Under a new law passed by the 2005 Legislature, Senate Bill 1072, the Oregon Department of Forestry is leading a collaborative effort with the Oregon Department of Energy and other state and federal partners to foster a biomass industry in the state. A market for forest biomass could provide economic incentive to expand fuel-reduction programs.
3. Reducing fuel loads on overstocked forests would improve overall forest health and resiliency. Thinning and brush removal would accelerate tree growth as well as increase resistance to disease outbreaks and insect infestations.
4. A thriving biomass industry could also increase Oregon's output of renewable energy at a time when the cost of energy is rising steadily. And this potential economic boon would likely benefit those nearest the forest: the state's struggling rural communities.
5. Biomass is currently uncompetitive in price with oil, gas and hydropower. But the potential benefits of forest biomass utilization could offset the higher cost through indirect, but real ways. These include:
 - lower wildfire suppression costs
 - improved water quality
 - less damage to fish-and-wildlife habitats
 - reduced air quality-related health problems
6. Extracting forest biomass is not without impact. Heavy equipment can cause soil compaction. However, rapid technological advances in logging equipment and related heavy machinery are shrinking the footprint on the land. And even in its present state, biomass extraction has a miniscule effect compared to that of an intense wildfire.
7. While Senate Bill 1072 calls for a collaborative effort by state agencies to encourage growth of a biomass industry in Oregon, active engagement by the private sector is critical to success. Business interests must provide the financial investments to build infrastructure and create jobs.

Key Audiences & Stakeholders

- Forest Landowners
- Forest Products Industry
- Public Utilities
- Power Companies
- Local Governments/Districts
- Environmental and NGO groups
- State Agencies
- Federal Agencies
- Tribal Governments
- The Governor's Office
- The Oregon Legislature
- The Oregon Congressional Delegation
- Citizens
- Community Groups
- Workforce & Contractors
- Educators
- Fire Protection Districts
- Community Fire Planning Groups

Tools & Technologies

- Website
 - Having a website for internal and external communications is a priority of the FBWG. The Oregon Department of Energy will host the FBWG site at:
<http://www.oregon.gov/ENERGY/RENEW/Biomass/BiomassHome.shtml>
- Publication
 - OFRI Study Report on: Opportunities for Biomass Energy and Biofuels from Oregon Forests – September 2006
 - OFRI Special Report on Woody Biomass – October 2006
- Briefing Papers
 - Like Rural Voices for Conservation’s “Community-based Forestry Perspectives on Woody Biomass”
- Conferences & Workshops
 - Members of the FBWG will sponsor conferences and workshops individually, in groups, and as the FBWG.
 - See next section for recent and planned conferences and workshops related to forest biomass.
- Tours
 - 2006 Summer Forest Biomass Tour – The Nature Conservancy, Oregon Business Council, OFRI, & ODF will cosponsor a tour to the Sycan Marsh/Lakeview area.
- Videos
 - Forest Service video about Stewardship Projects – is available
 - OSU Forestry Media Center
- Pod casts
 - Biomass updates and information in MP3 format could be downloaded from the website to be listened to on computers or MP3 players
- Low Power Radio Messages
 - Brief messages on biomass could be played on the OFRI Low Power Radio station near Suttle Lake.
- Speakers Bureau Presentation
 - A PowerPoint presentation on Biomass could be developed for use by the OFRI/OSAF Speakers Bureau. This presentation could be based on the one presented on February 6, 2006 to the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee on Alternative Fuels and Biomass and the Senate Interim Alternative Fuels Task Force.
- Interactive Maps
 - Like OFRI’s GeoBook on Protecting Oregon’s Forestlands
- E-mail List Serve
 - Small Wood News (Craig Rawlings: crawlings@mtcdc.org)
 - Base e-Mail Digest by Business Alliance for Sustainable Energy (pchang@coic.org)
- Demonstration Projects
 - Metolius Heritage Demonstration Project near Camp Sherman is a good example.

Recent and Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

1) China Boom - Implications for Forest Products Trade and Investment, Vancouver, BC, January 18-20, 2006, <http://www.forestprod.org/conf2006.html>

- 2) Harvesting Clean Energy, Spokane, WA, February 27-29, 2006, info@harvestcleanenergy.org
- 3) Bioenergy and Wood Products Conference II, Denver, CO, March 14-16, 2006, www.nationalbiomassconference.org
- 4) Positioning Oregon as an International Leader in the Clean Energy Industry, Bend, OR, March 20-21, 2006, www.coic.org/base/summit
- 5) Wood Technology Show and Clinic, Portland, OR, March 21-23, 2006, www.woodwideweb.com
- 6) Forest Leadership Forum, Portland, OR, May 3-6, 2006, www.metafore.org
- 7) Making Biomass Work, Klamath Falls, OR, April 6-7, 2006, www.sustainablenorthwest.org
- 8) SmallWood 2006, Richmond, VI, May 16-18, 2006, <http://www.forestprod.org/conf2006.html>
- 9) Forest Products Society Annual Meeting (special session on Woody Biomass Utilization Challenges and Opportunities), Newport Beach, CA, June 25-28, 2006, <http://www.forestprod.org/conf2006.html>
- 10) Opportunities for Biomass Energy and Biofuels from Oregon Forests, Corvallis, OR, October 31, 2006, <http://www.oregonforests.org>

Earned Media

This section outlines known media opportunities and strategies for 2005-2006 and assumes that media coverage will be sought opportunistically as events and issues emerge. The broadcast and print media are avenues to all stakeholders, but not in the detail necessary for targeted audiences. Thus, this section also details plans for use of the web site, newsletters and other means to reach targeted audiences.

The study has already received attention in the Roseburg media and in *Oregon Business*. Michael Milstein of *The Oregonian* has toured the project as well. More interest is likely as the first round of treatments are installed and as the study begins to produce significant results that address the adequacy of existing Oregon Forest Practices Act regulations.

Media opportunities

OFRI Study and Special Report: Will be released in September and October 2006 and distributed to media with a cover letter inviting reporters to attend the October 31 conference.

Future plans

- Send additional copies to reporters as opportunities arise to seek media coverage.

Biomass Working Group. Advise media of availability of Biomass Working Group web site.

Future plans

- Remind key reporters when research partners make new developments or reports on initial data collection and study objectives are available.

Editorial Board meetings: Explore interest when developments warrant.

- After October 2006 conference in Corvallis.
- Prepare opinion pieces.

Coverage of Summer 2006 Biomass Tour: Identify newsworthy topics.

- Discuss coverage potential
 - *Oregonian* - statewide implications.
 - Klamath Falls *Herald* – local interest in tours.
- Determine interest level at *Oregon Business* and other newspapers.
- Invite Steven Amen of OPB to cover conference for *Oregon Field Guide*.

Coverage of October 2006 Biomass Conference: Identify newsworthy topics.

- Discuss coverage potential
 - *Oregonian* - statewide implications.
 - Corvallis *Gazette-Times* and Albany *Democrat Herald* – local interest in conference
- Determine interest level at *Oregon Business* and other newspapers.

Media Background

The primary print media audiences are the 18 daily newspapers, The Associated Press and the business and agricultural weeklies. Weekly newspapers in areas where timber is a predominant economic driver will carry news releases, opinion pieces and local news of the forest sector.

Information also is often of interest to the state's 14 television stations with news departments and, on occasion, some radio stations. (Oregon Public Broadcasting and Jefferson Public Radio in Southern Oregon carry the most forest sector news on radio.) Except for public radio stations, radio news interest is primarily in local issues. Unless the story is major and visual, local television stations will not travel beyond a small range to cover a story. Portland stations will cover some stories almost anywhere in the state, but they must be major and visual (e.g., fires). Because of these limitations, the plan's focus with the media is primarily on the state's daily newspapers and local media – newspaper, TV and radio.

The Associated Press offers a daybook feature that reaches all of the state's news media with announcement of events of the day. This is particularly useful for radio and TV. The daybook lists news worthy events on the day they occur (e.g., a conference on Opportunities for Biomass Energy in Corvallis).

The Oregonian, *Eugene Register Guard* and *Salem Statesman Journal* combined reach 70% of the state's daily newspaper readers and generally cover forest sector issues extensively. The other daily newspapers with high interest in the forest sector are the *Medford Mail Tribune*, *Bend Bulletin*, *Grants Pass Daily Courier*, *Roseburg News Review*, *Albany Democrat Herald*,

Corvallis *Gazette Times*, Klamath Falls *Herald and News*, *Daily Astorian*, Coos Bay *World*, La Grande *Observer*, Baker City *Herald* and the Ashland *Daily Tidings*. The *Capital Press*, an agricultural weekly, covers the forest sector heavily with a correspondent in southern Oregon and reporters where it is published in Salem and elsewhere in the West.

Obtaining media coverage: Personal relationships are critical to securing coverage for Biomass for Energy from natural resources reporters, outdoor writers (primarily covering hunting and fishing) and editorial writers on the daily newspapers and the *Capital Press*. Except for *The Oregonian*, reporters and editorial writers typically cover a range of issues rather than just natural resources and the environment.

Three avenues exist for disseminating information to newspapers to promote better public understanding of Biomass for Energy: the news pages, the editorial page and the op-ed page.

For the news pages, news releases disseminate the more routine information, but more extensive coverage often results from personal phone or e-mail contact encouraging natural resources reporters to cover a research report, conference, workshop, tour or other event.

For editorial pages, a proven approach is to arrange for experts to meet with editorial boards in the case of the largest newspapers or editors in the case of the smaller daily newspapers.

The op-ed page offers the opportunity for the most control over the material because it is submitted to the editor of the op-ed page over the signature of an expert. Newspapers typically limit wordage for opinion pieces – 500-800 words – and may have other restrictions. Letters to the editor typically are limited to 150-250 words. For example, an op-ed piece can be submitted to selected daily newspapers in conjunction with the October 2006 conference in Corvallis.

Oregon Public Broadcasting television produces occasional documentaries on public policy issues. *Oregon Field Guide*, a regular series on OPB, offers potential for coverage of biomass for energy. The monthly magazine *Oregon Business* has reported on forestry and energy issues and has a reporter assigned to natural resources.

Timeline for Future Communications

Yet to come