

Woody Biomass Utilization

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

Expanding Opportunities While Ensuring a Sustainable Supply



Description: Woody biomass utilization is a key component of restoring and maintaining ecosystem health. “Woody biomass” is defined as the trees and woody plants, including limbs, tops, needles, leaves, and other woody parts, grown in a forest, woodland, or rangeland environment, that are the by-products of restoration, hazardous fuel reduction treatments (including urban forests), and forest management. At the national level the Forest Service, through the Woody Biomass Utilization Strategy (<http://www.fs.fed.us/woodybiomass/>) commits to following three principles to achieve four goals:

Principles	Goals
1. Pursue sustainability.	1. Supply
2. Empower entrepreneurial action.	2. Partnerships
3. Use science-based information and new technology	3. Science and Technology
	4. Marketing

The Northeastern Area’s (NA) Woody Biomass Business Plan (WBBP) is tiered to this National Strategy. The WBBP focuses on providing integrated support from all State and Private Forestry program areas to accomplish these national goals by providing leadership and technical assistance to those interested in the sustainable use of biomass resources across the Northeast and Midwest.

Key Issues:

- **Sustainability** – Efforts to utilize woody biomass need to consider the ecological, social, and economic impacts and insure forest systems are maintained or enhanced.
- **Maintaining working forest lands** – Woody biomass utilization needs to provide sufficient rewards to landowners and communities that they maintain or expand forestland.
- **Renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction** – Woody biomass utilization can diversify the region’s energy portfolio and improve air quality.
- **New economic opportunities through new value added products** – New markets for energy, carbon sequestration, liquid fuels, building materials, and chemicals from woody biomass can enhance local economies.

The key issues are directly addressed in the NA Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (NAASF) Strategic Plan 2008-2012.

Project Status:

- Woody biomass utilization is integrated into the NA Strategic Plan.
- The NA Woody Biomass Business Plan identifies integrated program efforts to support the sustainable use of woody biomass across NA.
- The Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC) supports the NA-wide effort through support for the NA Biomass Coordinator and by making woody biomass utilization a component of WERC’s grant program.

Budget History:

While there is no specific budget line item or program for woody biomass utilization, NA is able to provide technical and financial support for projects that address the sustainable use of woody biomass while implementing our existing programs.

Table 1 - Woody Biomass Utilization (<i>\$ Thousands</i>)				
	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008(1)
WERC	\$197.6	\$498.7	\$521	\$500
EAP	\$1,002.5	\$1,023.6	0	0
Jump Start	-	-	\$464.6	0
Partnership	-	-	\$384.7	0
Totals	\$1,200.1	\$1,522.3	\$1,370.3	\$500

(1) FY 2008 funding is an estimate dependent on funds available to support WERC

Future Direction:

The Forest Service is part of a coordinated effort at the USDA level to expand the use of woody biomass to improve forest health, reduce wildfire risk, and to diversify the nation's energy portfolio. NA is working with the NAASF, the Northern Research Station, the National Forest System - Eastern Region, and the Forest Products Laboratory to encourage the sustainable use of woody biomass to accomplish these same goals across the Northeast and Midwest.

The Northeastern Area expects to:

- Expand technical assistance capabilities related to the use of woody biomass for energy.
- Support the development of regional biomass harvesting guidelines.
- Develop a regional geographic information system database that can provide information on woody biomass use and availability across the 20 states served by NA.

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