

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now

SOCAN

Confronting Climate Change

<https://socan.eco>

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Reference HB3590

Chair Marsh and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment:

I write as cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN), an organization of over 2,000 rural Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and urge statewide action to address it. The mission of SOCAN is to promote awareness and understanding of the science of global warming and its climate chaos consequences and stimulate individual and collective action to address it. Since rural Oregonians occupy the frontlines in experiencing the impact of the drought, shrinking snowpack, wildfires and extreme weather that the climate crisis imposes, we are strongly committed to statewide action.

We fully understand the allure of using woody biomass as a fuel source in a time when it's important to lower carbon-based climate pollution. The allure is based on the notion that burning woody biomass releases into the atmosphere carbon captured from our current atmosphere rather than from an atmosphere hundreds of millions of years ago. It is this aspect of the biomass that has resulted in its unfortunately being defined as a net zero carbon fuel.

The catch is that climate pollution does not simply result from the combustion of fuel, but also from the complete lifecycle of that fuel. In the case of use of the woody biomass slash that accumulates from logging as a fuel, there seems to be a value in that the alternative to using the slash to generate electricity results in emissions that are equivalent to burning the slash where it is produced and piled. However, by generating electricity from this combustion, we gain the benefit of the generated electricity which could have the benefit of replacing fossil fuels. Of course, generating electricity from genuine clean fuel that does not emit climate pollution would be preferable.

The problem is that in the case of woody biomass, there is evidence that the complete lifecycle emissions from burning woody biomass does not provide the huge climate benefit often articulated in its defense (e.g., Sterman *et al.* 2018, Speare Cole 2021).

It is troubling that the proponents of this bill did not promote an unbiased study that evaluates the costs and benefits of this use of biomass, but clearly articulated the view that the purpose of the study is to demonstrate the value of using woody biomass.

The concern that I wish to express is that when OSU undertakes the study, they do so in an honest and unbiased manner and ensure that their conclusions regarding the use of woody biomass incorporate assessment of the full life cycle emissions resulting from the use of that woody biomass. We also urge that the assessment incorporate a determination of the reality that generation using woody debris does not result in an ultimate effort to harvest standing timber. Our fear is that the blossoming of a woody biomass utility industry will result in competition among plants for a limited supply of logging debris. This will then likely result in the harvesting of standing trees for electricity generation. Should this occur, the climate costs of the program should include assessment of the carbon sequestration compromised as a result of timber harvest.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Journet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Journet

Source:

Speare Cole # 2021. Biomass is promoted as a carbon neutral fuel. But is burning wood a step in the wrong direction? The Guardian October 21, 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/04/biomass-plants-us-south-carbon-neutral>

Sterman J, Siegel L, Rooney-Varga, J. 2018 Does replacing coal with wood lower CO2 emissions? Dynamic lifecycle analysis of wood bioenergy. Environmental Research Letters **13** 015007

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aaa512>