

December 14, 2012

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

The Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC), along with the undersigned organizations, are pleased to see the recent release of the FY 13 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill. As the committee forges ahead with critical decisions about programmatic funding, we wish to highlight a program under the U.S. Forest Service that we think has tremendous potential to deliver renewable energy solutions, as well as spur wood-based bioenergy markets. This type of work is critical to addressing fuel load problems that are at the core of the forest fire crisis plaguing western states, dependence on heating oil in the northeast, and creating long term jobs by making use of locally available forms of energy.

The Community Wood Energy Program or CWEP helps communities to sustainably harvest biomass from local forests and, in turn, use it as a source of energy. It provides grants to state and local governments to develop community wood energy plans and finance wood-burning systems for municipal heating and electricity. Local officials throughout the United States have been aggressively encouraging Congress to expand the benefits of these successful local initiatives in order to increase energy independence, develop more local renewable energy supplies, and create new employment opportunities. By assisting communities in the harvest and use of locally-sourced biomass, economic opportunities are created for local landowners and businesses while simultaneously supporting responsible forestry practices. The program also complements the U.S. Forest Service's successful Fuels for Schools Program, whose grants promote biomass heating, cooling, and electricity in schools.

The USDA has demonstrated the effectiveness of biomass thermal projects and their cost savings benefits. Numerous U.S. Forest Service Facilities, like the White Mountain NF administrative complex in Campton, NH and the Kings Hill Ranger Station in White Sulphur Springs, MT have secured biomass heating equipment that will reduce heating costs by up to 50%. With full funding, the Community Wood Energy Program can help rural communities achieve these same savings, access local fuel resources, and stimulate local economic activity.

It is for these reasons that we urge to you provide the full authorized funding level of \$5 million for the Community Wood Energy program in the Fiscal Year 2013 Interior Appropriations bill. If you would like more information on the success and benefits of biomass projects in the US, the Biomass Thermal Energy Council (BTEC) would be more than happy to provide you with this information.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Alliance for Green Heat
American Forest Foundation
Biomass Thermal Energy Council
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council
Forest Guild
Hardwood Federation
Heating the Midwest with Renewable Biomass
Maine Pellet Fuels Association
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Network of Forest Practitioners
New York Biomass Energy Alliance
Northeast Biomass Thermal Working Group
Northern Forest Center
Partnership for Rural America
Pellet Fuels Institute
Pennsylvania Biomass Energy Alliance
Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition Biomass Working Group
Sustainable Northwest
Watershed Research & Training Center