

News and Updates for Michigan's Biomass Industry.

Michigan Biomass is an advocate for and supported by the state's PURPA wood-fired power plants. Visit www.michiganbiomass.com for more information.

Quick Hits hot off the press

Dow Corning to do biomass

Dow Corning expects to start construction on its 40 megawatt gasification combined heat and power (CHP) plant in Midland later this year. Operation is set to begin the third quarter 2012.

It is expected to consume 400,000 tons of sustainably certified wood annually, including mill byproducts and eventually agriculture residues.

Cirque Energy will build, own and operate the facility.

Frontier Renewable to switch gas to biomass

Frontier Renewable Energy, a proposed ethanol plant near Kinross, has filed a permit application with the Dept. of Environmental Quality to use biomass power.

The permit seeks state approval of a 535 million Btu bubbling biomass boiler to utilize bark, lignin, methane and biomass solids from the methanator.

The project will produce 42 million gallons of ethanol per year from wood chips.

USDA/DOE award grants

The United States Department of Energy and Department of Agriculture have awarded \$47 million in grants to eight biomass researchers and start-ups.

Domtar Paper Company, LLC received the largest grant with \$7 million to develop a demonstration plant to convert paper mill waste into fermentable sugars and oil.

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MREP biomass committee update

The steering committee and several workgroups of the Biomass Committee of the Michigan Renewable Energy Program (MREP) conducted organizational meetings this winter.

The committee formed in January. In March the Outreach Workgroup and Steering Committee had organizational meetings. The Feedstock Workgroup had its meeting in April. While the Steering Committee will focus on operational protocols, the feedstock workgroup is starting to collect data on forest, agricultural and other potential energy sources. The outreach group will focus on public education and information efforts.

For more information visit the Michigan Public Service Commission MREP website at www.michigan.gov/mpsc and follow the links to "renewable energy" and "Michigan renewable energy program" and click on the "biomass" link.

Changes follow focus on forestry

New focus on the state's resource-based economy could have a positive impact on forestry and related activities.

Dept. of Natural Resources Director Rodney Stokes recently told a joint panel of the state legislature that enhancing resource-based economics – oil and gas, mining, forestry and tourism – is one of the department's top four priorities.

He also said establishment of Biological Stewardship Areas (BSAs) under the Living Legacy program will not result in reduced timber harvest as previously indicated by DNR staff.

BSAs are geographic locations presenting potential for preserving historical natural landscapes on public and private lands, although private lands would not be required to participate. Establishment of these areas was mandated by the legislature more than 10 years ago.

Stokes said the department would not allow BSAs to result in reduced logging. He said final review of the northern Lower BSAs would not be completed until similar areas are proposed for the southern Lower and Upper Peninsula so that the program can be assessed on a state-wide basis.

The Natural Resources Commission is also taking aim at land management practices and has reinstated its Land Use Policy Committee that was dissolved last year after the consolidation of the DNR and the Dept. of Environmental Quality. Trails, campground management; and timber, mineral, oil and gas production and their associated revenues will fall under the committee's purview.

House says cut more trees

The Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) Subcommittee for House Appropriations told the department it needs to cut more trees.

Statute mandates the state annually prescribe 63,000 acres for sale and harvest 58,000 acres. The appropriations subcommittee is budgeting 95,000 acres prescribed and 77,000 acres harvested – a 33% increase.

Sub chair Rep. Jon Bumstead (R-Newaygo) said the numbers were in response to industry saying the state needs to sell more trees.

That target represents and additional 19,000 acres of harvest that could produce about 239,000





green tons of residue and mill byproducts for fuel, enough for about 18 megawatts of production.

Pilot would help private landowners

The Michigan Association for Conservation Districts (MACD) has proposed a 3-year, \$5 million pilot proposal to the Michigan legislature to prove their idea they could cost-effectively assist non-industrial private landowners (NIPL) manage their timberlands for economic value.

MACD says its plan could see 43% of the state’s NIPLs actively manage their timber, putting more than a million cords of wood into the market over three years, generating \$163 million in economic activity.

Budget cuts over the past few years have gutted state-run private landowner programs.

Conservation districts are independent agencies funded by the state and federal governments. The pilot proposal would give oversight to the Michigan Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Clean energy standards

The U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee has received comment on what a “clean energy standards” should look like in response to a Presidential initiative to produce 80% of the nation’s energy from clean energy sources. The Senate wants to know what that looks like:

- Should regulated utilities, or everyone be regulated?
- What technologies and energy sources should qualify?
- How should crediting systems and timelines function?
- What consumer protections are needed?
- How would it mesh with state renewable and clean energy standards?

NREL BioEnergy Atlas debuts

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) has released its BioEnergy Atlas that shows what part of the country has biomass that could turn into energy.

The GIS program folds layers of related data onto a single map that provides geographic information on biomass feedstock, bio-power and biofuels potential, production and distribution.

The atlas enables users to conduct more timely and accurate analysis of the potential of given locations in terms of biomass availability, such as standing stocks and mills that produce byproducts.

Data include a variety of biomass feedstocks, existing biofuel facilities, biomass power plants and traditional power plants; tradition-

al and alternative fueling stations and energy use data. Users can conduct queries, analysis and get snapshots of state resources and infrastructure.

The BioEnergy Atlas is accessible at <http://maps.nrel.gov/bioenergyatlas>.

EPA actions filed

A coalition representing a cross section of industries, including biomass power, is taking steps to delay new rules on boiler emissions until additional research and modeling is conducted.

A coalition representing manufacturers, power producers, agricultural interests, the forest products industry and the chemical industry filed a petition asking EPA to formally reconsider the rules released in February and stay implementation of the rules until the reconsideration process is completed.

In December last year EPA asked the U.S. Circuit Court for more time to revise its proposed rules because it had not considered all the data available. The court rejected the appeal and ordered the rules released in February.

Good carbon, bad carbon

One would think that more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would be a good thing for plants, like pumping pure oxygen into your home or office.

Well, yes... and no. Depends on what plants are using the CO2.

According to a U.S. Dept. of Agriculture study soybeans and sorghum increased photosynthesis and improved moisture efficiency under “elevated” levels of CO2. However, weeds also fair well, according to a study by the Weed Science Society of America that showed four varieties of pest grasses improved their resistance to herbicides under similar CO2 conditions.

Just goes to show: nature has its own system of checks and balances.

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The University of Kentucky received \$6.93 million to study a process to convert biomass to a mixture of butanol, ethanol, acetone and organic acids, while Cellana LLC, a subsidiary of Hawaii-based HR BioPetroleum, received \$5.5 million to develop a protein supplement to improve the animal feed byproducts of biomass feedstocks and enhance the value chain.

Exelus Inc. received \$5.19 million grant to develop energy crops that can tolerate drought, salt and poor lands, while Metabolix Inc., of Cambridge, Mass. received \$6 million to improve processes for making fuels from switchgrass.



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