

FOREST BIOMASS MEETING NOTES

January 31, 2011

This meeting was scheduled to fulfill the commitment made by Commissioner Goldmark to convene a meeting of interested stakeholders to initiate a dialog about what might be involved in addressing sustainable biomass harvest from forest lands.

The emphasis of the meeting was to gain clear understanding of specific concerns about forest biomass harvest under the forest practices rules; to develop a plan for “next steps” by the group; and determine the need for a review of impacts from the harvest of biomass from forest lands.

AGENDA

3:00 – 3:10 p.m.	Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review Bridget Moran, DNR
3:10 – 3:20 p.m.	Update of DNR Forest Biomass Supply Assessment Jeffrey Linquist, DNR
3:20 – 3:30 p.m.	Forest Practices Rule Making – How will it affect forest biomass harvest? Marc Engel, DNR
3:30 – 4:45 p.m.	Forest Biomass Discussion – Concerns & Issues Group discussion, facilitated by Bridget Moran Topics for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the specific concerns about the harvest of forest biomass relative to the proposed Forest Practice Rule? (3:30 – 4:30)• What are acceptable ‘next steps’ in ensuring that forest biomass be harvested sustainably? Examples: Quarterly Meetings, Biomass ‘science days’ (including tours), other? (4:30 – 4:45)
4:45 – 5:00 p.m.	Group Charter & Wrap – up Bridget Moran, DNR

Attendees:

Adrian Miller – WFPA
Miguel-Perez Gibson – Forest & Fish
Conservation Caucus
Matt Logenbaugh – NOAA Fisheries
David Whipple – WDFW
Stephen Bernath – Ecology
Jim Peters – NWIFC
Peter Goldman – WFLC (by phone)

DNR Staff:

Bridget Moran – Deputy Supervisor
Craig Partridge – Policy Director
Rachel Jamison – Energy and Climate
Policy Specialist
Jeff Lindquist – Biomass Specialist
Darin Cramer – Forest Practices Division
Manager
Marc Engel – Forest Practices Asst.
Division Manager

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

There was an introductory discussion clarifying the commitment made by Commissioner Goldmark at the November 2010 Forest Practices Board meeting to convene a meeting of interested stakeholders to initiate a dialog about what might be involved in addressing ecologically sustainable biomass harvest from forestlands. There was also discussion regarding a desire to have representatives of the biomass utilization facilities be part of future discussions. All were in agreement that their participation would be useful.

Update of DNR Forest Biomass Supply Assessment

Jeff Linquist shared that the University of Washington and TSS consultants are continuing the ongoing work with the Forest Biomass Supply Assessment. Current work includes gathering landowner, geospatial and inventory data. Also, the study group is working with all forest landowner types to simulate all harvest scenarios across owner types. The first deliverable product from the study is a harvest matrix and has been submitted to DNR for review. The refinement of available and harvestable biomass continues within the scope of the study. The study will finish in the late summer of 2011.

There was recognition that the Supply Assessment would provide significant information and be valuable in relation to the mutual desire to understand on-site biomass retention needs. However, concern was stated that this study would be based on today's economics and technology without a biomass industry already in place. It was recognized that the scope of the study was not to be a comprehensive evaluation of ecological sustainability, but rather an exploration of available supply that accounted for existing constraints to biomass harvest (e.g. regulation, operational feasibility, etc.). An additional concern was expressed that pressure for biomass harvest might increase very dramatically over today's level leading to very intense efforts to remove biomass from the forest in all forms across the landscape. A desire was stated to proactively address the situation by evaluating what potential concerns might exist, so that any needed data collection, analysis, rule-making or other steps could be put in motion with plenty of time to proceed before the industry becomes established. General concern stated that people did not want to address biomass supply concerns after significant financial investments had been made, facilities were built and jobs created.

Forest Practices Rule Making – How will it affect forest biomass harvest?

Marc Engel summarized the current rule-making, which will include "biomass harvest" as a forest practice. Therefore all of the activities related to forest biomass activities will have to comply with all components of the Forest Practices Rules, meaning all protections and standards in place will apply to biomass activities.

DNR staff will bring the Forest Practices Board a draft CR102 (rule-making process step), which is the next step in the formal rule-making process, possibly leading to a CR103, or final rule, being adopted by the Board in May 2011.

Forest Biomass Discussion – Concerns & Issues

Specific concerns identified were:

1. What quantity of woody material needs to remain to be ecologically sustainable?
2. With all the existing forest practices rules in place, and biomass harvest happening, what does that look like on the landscape?
3. Public concern & activity around biomass nationally. Desire to define state intention.
4. Industry demand may drive removal practices to change in a way that could adversely affect public resources
5. I-937 renewable energy standard includes biomass residue, but the definition of residue has not been clarified.
6. Re-statement of the item identified above about addressing the issue prior to large capital investments to ensure whatever limits/rules may need to be developed are contemplated early.
7. How can monitoring and studies be funded? A role for the biomass sector?
8. Federal services would like to better understand ecological issues, but would like to cover the activity under the Forest Practices HCP if possible
9. Immediately jumping to rule making is problematic for landowners, are there thresholds that can be developed to trigger action?
10. Is the Forest Practices Board the right place to develop rules on the activity, what about at the facilities?
11. Concern regarding putting roadblocks in front of an industry that is in development, what's the message we are trying to send?
12. Are there voluntary best management practices that could be developed or adopted in the meantime?

Generally Agreed-Upon Next Steps:

1. Continue collaborative dialog and bring in additional perspectives;
2. Conduct joint literature review of applicable scientific literature;
3. Provide for stakeholder review of draft supply study.
4. Evaluate what current rules provide and monitor activities and results on the ground;
5. Conduct a tour of operations and/or hold a science day to educate ourselves;
6. Bring conclusions back to the Forest Practices Board.