

**Source:** Biomass R&D Technical Advisory Committee

**Advisory To:** Biomass R&D Board

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**Issue:** *The Sense of the Committee on Opportunities for Woody Bioenergy with Healthier and Safer Forests*

Today is a period of great transition for forests, a truly unique point in history for innovative opportunities supporting sustainable management of a national resource. Important changes are needed to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires and to respond to damage from insect infestations, hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters. New thinking is evolving for using the forests responsibly as a tool for reducing carbon emissions, for improving water quality and wildlife habitats, and for new uses of forest biomass for bioenergy and bioproducts. Transforming forest management will be a massive undertaking, involving many players: governments at all levels and in their multiple organizations; many different advocacy groups and collaboratives; universities and colleges; corporations from different sectors; and, concerned private citizens. It will be both centralized and de-centralized, with no one-size solution fitting all of the problems, because of America's continental variations of geography, weather, culture, flora and fauna. In the end, this all is about rebuilding trust among all the different interests that necessary changes in forest management can and will be done responsibly for the multiple environmental services of forests: carbon mitigation; soil and water conservation; wildlife protection; recreation; new hope for embattled rural communities; and, new renewable energy advances. It is an opportunity for needed change that may never come again. This is why we deem 2019, *The Year of the Tree*.

## A Conclusions of the Biomass R&D Technical Advisory Committee

- We reiterate the Committee's November 2018 recommendations calling for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to implement as soon as practicable the common sense reform of regulations governing the Renewable Fuel Standard to facilitate the utilization of a broad range of feedstocks, including woody biomass, while balancing environmental protections.
- We recognize the forward thinking and growing momentum behind new government approaches to forest management to reduce the risk of fire and other damages and to simultaneously open up new opportunities for woody bioenergy and bioproducts, as evidenced by recent orders issued by the President of the United States and the Governor of California.
- We intend to use our 2019 quarterly Committee meetings to examine fully the many linkages between healthy forests, the growth of the advanced woody bioenergy and bioproducts sector, and their socioeconomic impacts.
- We will listen to a wide range of outside parties and then make recommendations to Committee stakeholders on such topics as:
  - Learning from successful local partnerships that have provided new economic opportunities, especially to rural communities;
  - Integration of new bioenergy and bioproducts technologies and markets with the changing mix of traditional forest industries;
  - Bridging across governmental agencies and standardizing approaches and even, terminologies;
  - Specific woody biomass market sector analyses;

- The role of private insurance markets;
  - Understanding the failures of past efforts for woody bioenergy and better forest management;
  - Positioning within a global context; and
  - Proactive response to natural disasters for rapid recovery and for new uses and conversion technologies for forest biomass in bio-based materials, fuels and power.
- We find ourselves at a point where new technologies are emerging with potential to produce a whole new set of renewable products and energy while simultaneously delivering sustainability and carbon reduction benefits.
  - Despite economic challenges facing many traditional forest products companies, innovative, pioneering leaders within this industry have begun to explore investment opportunities for partnering in the area of energy development with potential to fundamentally transform the economics of wood-based industries.
  - Biomass technologies and product development requires high risk investments, therefore special emphasis is needed in assessing social and economic benefits these technologies could bring to forest resource management.
  - We believe our specific recommendations in federal research, policies and regulations can help advance the ongoing public conversation about safer and healthier forests and build a consensus framework for a systematic approach.

## B

### The Committee's Plans for the "Year of the Tree"

- The TAC proposes to organize its remaining 2019 meetings around an agenda exploring in-depth the topic of sustainable uses of forest biomass for biofuels, bio-based products and biopower.
- The TAC recognizes that the pressures facing private forest land owners differ significantly from those pressures on public lands, with further complications arising from types and amounts of forests, culture, industry and infrastructure.
- The TAC proposes to analyze both the Pacific Northwest and the Southeast U.S., particularly focusing on their unique regional characteristics, especially their emerging technologies, scale of forest biomass, environmental consideration and citizen involvement. The TAC intends to incorporate local, state and regional perspectives from public and private groups.
- Following two quarterly meetings focused on forest biomass issues and opportunities in those two key regions, the TAC intends to use the fourth quarterly meeting to synthesize our findings and to explore relevant global perspectives to form the basis for our final recommendations to the federal government.