

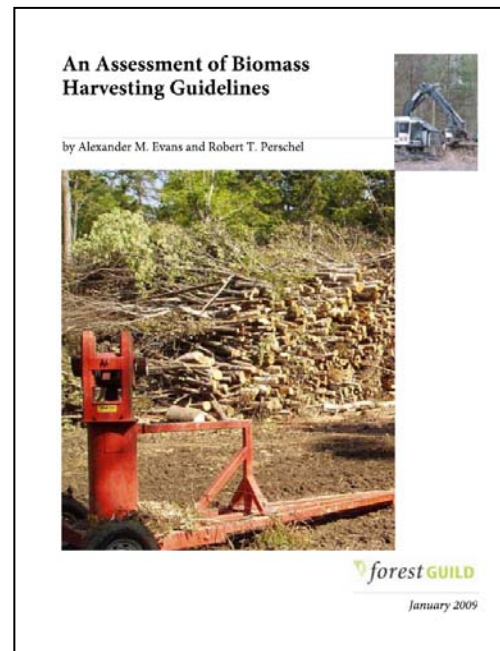
Forest Guild Releases First Report Assessing States' Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines

Santa Fe, N.M. —Volatile oil prices, concerns about carbon dioxide emissions, and catastrophic wildfires have created new interest in removing wood from forests as an alternative energy resource. In response, states from Maine to Missouri are developing guidelines for the harvest of forest biomass (logging slash, small-diameter trees, tops, limbs, or small trees). A new report by the Forest Guild, *An Assessment of Biomass Harvesting Guidelines*, is the first comprehensive review of these biomass harvesting guidelines. The report also provides recommendations to ensure that new guidelines promote sustainable use of biomass from forests.

Forest harvesting guidelines provide foresters and loggers advice on how to remove woody biomass and how much should be left in the woods for healthy watersheds, wildlife habitat, protection of long-term productivity, and other ecosystem functions. Previously developed forest practice guidelines by states did not anticipate the increased removal of biomass and thus offer no specific guidance on removal limits needed to keep forests healthy.

“New interest in woody biomass is a double-edged sword,” says Dr. Zander Evans, Forest Guild Research Director and the report’s author. “If harvested sustainably, biomass can meet some of our energy needs and leave our forests healthier than they are now. However, without appropriate guidance, biomass harvests can seriously degrade our forests.”

In general, wood that would have been left on-site under traditional harvest conditions is removed in a biomass harvest, which can mean a reduction of dead wood. Dead wood plays an important role in the ecosystem by providing wildlife habitat, cycling nutrients, aiding plant regeneration, decreasing erosion, and storing carbon. The reduction of dead wood is one of the key differences between biomass removal and traditional harvest; it should be a focus of future guidelines. Guidelines should make clear and specific recommendations to retain standing dead trees (snags), existing coarse woody material (CWM), harvest-generated CWM, fine woody material (FWM), and the forest floor and litter layer.



The creation of new guidelines for forestry presents the opportunity to encourage practices that go beyond minimum acceptable practices and instead focus on enhancing the full suite of ecological values.

Key Report Recommendations:

- Consider the full range of potential impacts of biomass removals when developing new guidelines.
- Use the best available science for the ecoregion(s) covered by the guidelines to determine appropriate recommendations.
- Include as much public input and collaboration as possible in guideline development.
- Define terms such “woody biomass” clearly and appropriately.
- Make clear and specific recommendations to retain standing dead trees, existing CWM, harvest generated CWM, FWM, and the forest floor.

The Forest Guild, headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is a national organization of nearly 700 foresters, allied professionals, and supporters who manage forestlands in the United States and Canada and advocate for ecologically sound forest practices. The mission of the Forest Guild is to practice and promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry—“excellent forestry”— as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. The Guild maintains a presence nationwide with staff and volunteer coordinators in 12 states and nearly all major forest regions of the country.

The report, *An Assessment of Biomass Harvesting Guidelines*, is available at:
http://www.forestguild.org/publications/research/2009/biomass_guidelines.pdf

www.forestguild.org