



## Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Governor Deval L. Patrick  
Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray  
Secretary Ian A. Bowles

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### **PATRICK-MURRAY ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES BIOMASS SUSTAINABILITY STUDY**

*White paper will inform Department of Energy Resources regulations for qualifying biomass facilities under the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard*

BOSTON – The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) today announced its selection of the Manomet Center for Conservation Services of Plymouth to lead a comprehensive study of issues related to biomass sustainability and carbon policy. Launched at the direction of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian Bowles, the six-month study will result in a “white paper” that brings the best science to bear as DOER prepares new regulations to establish sustainability criteria biomass facilities must meet under the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard.

“Biomass is an important renewable energy resource, but it must be developed in a way that is truly sustainable, maintaining our forests and protecting our environment for future generations,” Secretary Bowles said. “I am confident that the top-notch team of experts DOER has assigned to this study will provide answers to the full range of scientific and public policy questions still outstanding on the environmental impacts of this technology.”

Biomass technology has qualified under the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) since the RPS was created in 2002. The RPS provides financial incentives for eligible renewable energy facilities by requiring utility companies and other electricity suppliers to deliver a minimum percentage of RPS-qualified renewable energy to their customers. The Green Communities Act of 2008 accelerated the rate of increase of this percentage (currently at 4 percent) from 0.5 to 1 percent annually.

Public policy questions regarding the environmental impacts of biomass have arisen in the wake of recent proposals for four new biomass plants in western Massachusetts. The selection of the Manomet Center brings to these questions a team of consultants with national and worldwide recognition in forestry and conservation. In addition to Manomet, the team includes the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, the Forest Guild, the Biomass Energy Resource Center, and other independent forest ecologists and resource economists. The work of the team will be reviewed by an Independent Advisory Panel including David Foster, Director of the Harvard Forest, and Alaric Sample, President of the Pinchot Institute – both representing organizations that are global leaders on carbon neutrality, ecosystem management, environmental policy and the conservation of forest landscapes.

“We need a better understanding of the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of biomass feedstock, as well as the impact biomass plants have on forest resources,” DOER

Commissioner Phil Giudice said. "The information produced through this study will position the Commonwealth to adopt best-in-the-nation sustainability criteria for biomass RPS eligibility."

At the start of data gathering process, the Manomet-led team will hold a public stakeholder meeting in western Massachusetts in late November to introduce the project and solicit questions and comments from environmental organizations, regional planning commissions, the forest products industry, members of the public, and state agencies. Three additional presentations and discussion sessions will be held to review the project's findings.

Among issues the study team will explore and report on to DOER are: sustainable forest management and ecological implications of biomass harvesting; assessment of the projected development of biomass facilities in Massachusetts; carbon sequestration of managed versus unmanaged forests; the net effect of biomass energy on atmospheric carbon balance; and US and international policies with regard to biomass and carbon neutrality.

"The benefits and impacts of all our energy sources deserve serious examination, and biomass is no exception," said Kevin Knobloch, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "When managed sustainably, biomass can reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and cut global warming pollution as it protects water and soil quality, wildlife habitat and biodiversity."

"CLF applauds the Patrick Administration for launching this biomass sustainability study," said Conservation Law Foundation President John Kassel. "As this initiative recognizes, it is not accurate to assume that biomass energy is 'carbon neutral' or sustainable. If we are going to 'get biomass right,' as we must, there is an information gap to be bridged. We hope this study will deliver the guidance needed to maintain the integrity of our forest ecosystems and design biomass projects that will improve rather than worsen our carbon footprint."

"Our collective challenge is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen our natural areas in order limit climate change's disruptive effects," said Wayne Klockner, executive director of The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts. "In order to be part of the solution, biomass facilities must be appropriately sized, sited and operated, and their fuels must be harvested according to the highest forest management standards. We are pleased that the Patrick Administration has engaged our colleagues at Manomet to take on this important issue."

Under terms of the contract announced today, the Biomass Sustainability and Carbon Policy Study must be complete by May 30, 2010.

The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) seeks to strengthen the Commonwealth's position as a clean energy leader by enhancing energy efficiency in the state's public and private sectors, maximizing development of renewable energy resources, demonstrating the feasibility of new energy strategies, and spurring job growth through support for clean energy technology companies.

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