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NEW FOREST GUILD POLICY AIMED AT BIOENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Santa Fe, New Mexico—The Forest Guild, a national association of professional foresters and resource managers, announces a new national policy statement on Forest Biomass for sustainable use of forest resources for bioenergy and climate change mitigation.

The conservation and management of forests are increasingly the focus of national and state level policies regarding climate change and renewable energy. “These impending policy decisions will impact the health and integrity of forests for generations to come.” explains Michael DeBonis, Forest Guild Executive Director. “Members of the Forest Guild want to be clear about the opportunities, limitations, and risks involved in looking to our forests as a source of energy while mitigating climate change; this document accomplishes that.”

The statement establishes the Forest Guild policy on the promise and limitations of biomass for energy and its role in an overall energy strategy. Adherence to this policy will ensure that biomass can play an important role in our energy future while improving the practice of excellent forestry.

Led by Forest Guild Northeast Region Director, Bob Perschel, a 33 member working group spent 6 months crafting the policy statement. “Our diverse membership allows us to incorporate the experience of field practitioners with cutting edge scientists and leading environmental advocates,” explains Bob Perschel. “The result is a perspective that blends hope, caution, and experience earned through years of working with our country’s forests.”

Dennis Becker, Assistant Professor of Forest Resources at the University of Minnesota and a member of the working group explains, “Biomass utilization has the potential to simultaneously meet a number of import goals such as wildfire risk reduction, forest health, Green House Gas mitigation, and community development. This document helps to bring the various stakeholders together in achieving those goals whereas in the past the issues would have driven us apart.”

Another working group member, Dylan Jenkins, Director of Forest Conservation for The Nature Conservancy’s Pennsylvania Chapter, emphasizes the need for the integration of ecologically sound forestry practices in biomass utilization. “The Guild’s position on forest biomass acknowledges the rightful place of sustainably harvested wood in meeting our nation’s green energy needs. It promotes a positive vision for forest biomass and emphasizes that economic, ecologic, and social forest values must be maintained to ensure wood energy is truly sustainable.”

While “biomass” has been traditionally removed from U.S. forests as a source of raw material for wood and paper products, to reduce forest fire risk, and to improve forest health and productivity, state and national policies are setting the stage for increased biomass removals for energy and climate mitigation.

In the face of increased use of biomass for energy, the Forest Guild Biomass Policy Statement addresses four major areas:

1. **Assurances for Sustainability** - Public policy should limit demand for biomass to the amount that can be grown, harvested, and supplied sustainably. The first line of defense against over harvesting is strong stand-level harvesting and management standards at the state level. Each state should implement or amend best management practices (BMPs) to include biomass harvesting standards appropriate for forest types in that state.
2. **Highest and Best Utilization** - Forest resources should be used as efficiently as possible. Efficiencies of using biomass for energy can vary from 20 to 90 percent depending on how the wood is used. Appropriately scaled heating and cooling or combined heat and power applications are the most efficient energy uses of biomass.
3. **Climate change mitigation** - Once the biomass leaves the forest, its effectiveness as a renewable energy source to help mitigate atmospheric carbon emissions and slow climate change depends on its use and method of combustion.
4. **Biomass removal on public lands** - Public forests are established to serve public values, and those that are designated as management areas appropriate for timber harvests should be available for sustainable biomass removal.

Forest Guild Director of Research, Dr. Alexander Evans adds: “The available research, while still limited, indicates there are considerable risks associated with removing too much biomass. If we do this right and follow sustainable harvesting standards our forests can play an important role in these intertwined issues of energy and climate change.

Michael Ferrucci, President and forester with Interforest and a working group member reflects on the policy statement from a field perspective. “The Guild’s policy on forest biomass is clear, compelling and timely. The issue is outlined and the best policy and management actions are emphasized. Field foresters should pay attention, and can use this information to inform their work.”

The Forest Guild is a national organization of more than 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.

www.forestguild.org

INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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