



FAQ

Wood-to-Energy Roadmap

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What is the Wood-to-Energy Roadmap?

The Roadmap is a plan for enhancing the role of our nation's forestlands in meeting U.S. energy needs while sustaining "forests as forests."

Who created the Roadmap?

A diverse panel of leading forestry, conservation, scientific and energy experts created the Roadmap following two years of stakeholder discussion facilitated by the 25x25 Alliance

Won't using woody biomass to provide energy be harmful to forestland?

No. In fact, the focused use of woody biomass to help meet America's energy needs could increase the nation's forest land base and improve the environmental services that land provides.

How do you 'take' from forestland and 'enhance' it at the same time?

The Roadmap recommends incentives to landowners and foresters that encourage the sustainable use of forestlands for bioenergy and wood products, using better management practices. Without these incentives, forestlands might otherwise be converted for development.

Why use biomass as an energy source?

Biomass utilization will help reduce the nation's dependence on foreign energy sources and help contribute to other national security objectives. Also, woody biomass is one of the nation's most cost-effective and readily available renewable raw materials for energy use.

Is there an environmental benefit to using wood for energy?

When biomass is excluded from salvage for energy and other uses, wood decay results in methane, a powerful greenhouse gas (GHG). Using that same material to produce energy promotes better forest management, reduces GHGs and, most importantly, reduces the threats to human health and safety.

What are the benefits for forestland owners?

Encouraging healthy forests is a good thing. Sustainably increasing the inventory of available renewable biomass is a good thing; and increasing and strengthening markets for the forest products coming from forest lands is good for forest owners and managers.

As such, woody biomass must be a part of any solution to meeting the nation's renewable energy goals particularly in regions where wind, solar, and other renewable energy options are not viable.

- o The nation's forests need to be viewed as a strategic national resource, just as important as coal, oil, and natural gas, in helping to meet the nation's need for heat, electric power, transportation fuel, and bio-based products
- o All sustainably managed forests, public or private, should be equally eligible to supply biomass. Classifying renewable biomass should be based on whether it is derived from sustainably managed forests – including strict compliance with all federal and state environmental laws – rather than on who owns the land. Biomass removals from forest lands requires a flexible approach that draws upon the strength of existing mechanisms—adapted where necessary—to meet local conditions.

- o The environmental, economic, and social challenges posed by growing and harvesting forest biomass for energy production are fundamentally the same as those posed by growing and harvesting biomass for other purposes.
- o Policies that encourage energy production from forest biomass must consider both the short and long-term impacts of renewable energy markets on forest resources and avoid incentives that lead to unsustainable forest management practices.
- o Many existing forest management tools are readily available to land owners and managers to assist them in caring for their lands in a sustainable manner, such as forest certification systems, management planning programs, professional foresters, and proven, science-based best management practices. We should utilize these existing tools to the greatest extent, and avoid new stipulations that would reduce the viability of the biomass market, particularly for small forest owners.

Supply/Demand Perspectives

- o The nation's commercial timber land base has been relatively stable over the past several decades. Investments in forest management have resulted in a significant increase in volume growth over the same time period. Forest supplies are growing due to greater investment, and can respond to increases in demand, including energy uses.
- o Biomass for energy will develop over a number of years with ample opportunity to adjust course as needed.
- o Biomass utilization for energy and transportation fuels could potentially open up new opportunities for timberland managers to provide an increase in supply and also accomplish thinning treatments that would otherwise be considered "pre-commercial thinnings" that are a cost to management. Another opportunity for increasing supply of biomass could result from accomplishing road maintenance clearing of vegetation in-growth along road shoulders – biomass material that is cut and left on-site by mowers and mulching equipment.

Keeping Working Agricultural and Forest Lands Working

- o Working agricultural and forest lands are a vital part of the nation's strategic natural resource infrastructure. Sustaining and enhancing the value of these lands both to society and to their owners is of vital national importance.
- o There are millions of family forest owners across the country who own nearly two-thirds of the private forestland in the U.S. These lands are critical national infrastructure, especially as climate change calls for additional carbon storage to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and demands increase for renewable energy to reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources.
- o Producing renewable energy from sustainable family forests, gives family owners additional markets and revenue streams for their products.

Government policy can impact biomass supply

- o Letting markets operate leads to efficient outcomes. Cost share programs, education and favorable tax policy can result in greater investments in agricultural and forest lands and ultimately, more biomass.
- o A broad science-based definition of renewable biomass will increase the supply and reduce supply impacts on existing markets and users.

Biomass for electrical energy

- o Biomass power has many favorable attributes. In contrast to most other renewables which generate intermittently, biomass is a reliable, dispatchable resource, which meets the needs of electricity users, who demand that power be available at all times. It employs proven technology with an excellent operating history of high reliability. Biomass power is also cost competitive, roughly equal in cost to new coal plants or cheaper if projected carbon dioxide costs are taken into account.