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May 9, 2011

A Northeastern Biomass Thermal Call to Action

Northeastern Governors and Members of Congress from New England, New York and Pennsylvania:

Energy supply and use is a national priority and a major policy focus across the United States. The need to create clean-energy jobs, reduce reliance on foreign oil, address threats to national security, increase our overall energy efficiency, and address climate change are some of the issues driving the need for a new national energy policy and practice.

The northeastern US is more dependent on imported fossil energy for heating than any other region of the country, and heat energy represents over **one-third** of all energy consumption. This historical dependence has profound consequences to our economy and on the welfare of low-income citizens, many of whom heat their homes with fossil fuels. At current retail prices, **Northeasterners spend over \$16 billion on heating oil alone, of which over \$12 billion leaves our economy each year.**

Biomass energy, harvested from the nation's forests and farms, has the potential to provide an important source of renewable, sustainable thermal energy for the country, particularly in the petroleum-dependent northeast. To advance high efficiency biomass thermal technologies, the northeast and the nation need an energy policy that supports and delivers jobs through regional energy independence, energy efficiency, affordability, sustainability, and the reduction in GHG emissions. The country's energy policy should extend beyond electricity and transportation and address all major sectors of energy use **including thermal energy**.

To this end, the undersigned leaders of businesses, organizations and agencies seek your support for the following policy initiatives at the federal, state or regional levels. As implemented, these policies will create jobs, expand the domestic renewable energy sector, reduce dependence on foreign oil, ensure sustainable, ecologically sound biomass supply, and help reduce CO2 emissions.

Policy Priorities:

Federal Action

- Revise the federal Renewable Fuels Standard 2 to include solid biomass as a replacement for home heating oil
- Adopt a national Clean Energy Standard that includes thermal energy and efficient biomass technologies, including combined heat and power
- Provide effective tax incentives for the production and usage of efficient, sustainable biomass thermal energy – incentives that already exist for other renewable energy
- Provide investment capital and financing to catalyze the biomass thermal sector through grants and revolving loan programs
- Support research and development of ultra-clean combustion biomass technologies

Regional Action

- Utilize RGGI funds universally across the region to expand efficient and sustainable thermal energy, including biomass
- Broaden the proposed Low Carbon Fuel Standard to include heating fuels as well as transportation fuels

State Action

(Initial policy priorities)

- ***Vermont:*** *Comprehensive Energy Plan, Recommendations of the Bio-E Group, Conversion of oil burners to pellet burning appliances via Efficiency Vermont with RGGI funding.*
- ***New York:*** *Form an interagency task force to evaluate what the state can do to encourage biomass as a replacement for oil and propane.*
- ***Maine:*** *Greater attention by public officials, particularly Efficiency Maine, to publicizing clean wood burning heating systems as an alternative to oil heat.*
- ***New Hampshire:*** *H.B 543 FN – To authorize REC's under the NH RPS for thermal and electric biomass CHP facilities.*
- ***Massachusetts:*** *Active support for MA renewable portfolio standards that encourage higher efficiency biomass combined heat and power generation, and support for comprehensive biomass thermal incentives once MA Dept of Energy Resources completes work on MA RPS revisions.*
- ***Pennsylvania:*** *Dedicated funding from existing state energy bond programs for biomass thermal/CHP institutional-to-industrial scale projects using sustainable feedstocks.*

We, the undersigned businesses, organizations and agencies, believe biomass energy can and should play an important role in America's renewable energy strategy, and support these actions as a means towards realizing the energy and climate benefits of biomass as a component of a sustainable and renewable energy future.

We stand ready to work with you to translate these policy concepts into cost effective measures that can help our region build a stronger future. Representatives of the Northeast Biomass Thermal Working Group look forward to meeting with you or your staff to advance this call to action. Please contact either of us to initiate these discussions.

Respectfully,

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Endorsers

(Please sign-up at <http://www.nebioheat.org/signon.asp> using your name, company or organization, phone and email)