

Biomass Task Group  
June 15, 2022 – Minutes

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Zoom Virtual Meeting – Meeting was recorded and [posted online](#)

Task Group Members Present: Liz Miller, Adam Sherman, Judy Dow, Charlie Hancock, Billy Coster, Richard Hopkins, Megan O'Toole

Staff members present: Marian Wolz, Pat Field

Minutes by: Marian Wolz

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8:30 AM Introductions, Reminder of Protocol of the Group, and approval of 6/1 Minutes

- [Minutes](#) and agenda approved as drafted

8:35 AM Steering Committee Action on Biofuels

- Climate Council Steering Committee agreed to proposal put forward to focus narrowly on woody biomass in electricity generation and other biofuel issues will be considered and delegated by the Council when the life-cycle analysis is completed.
- Task Group members discussed the agreement from the Steering Committee. Agreed that if there are concerns and thoughts around the issue of biofuels, those should be shared with the Steering Committee while this Task Group continues to work and focus on the more narrow scope of woody biomass for electricity generation and issues related to woody biomass fuel sourcing and its various impacts and benefits.

8:40 AM Scope and Proposed Questions

- Task Group reviewed the [questions for each component of scope](#).
- Concern raised that public health impacts of biomass are not considered in scope. Recommendation to bring in Jared Ulmer with VDH and John Hinckley to present to the task group on public health impacts of the use of biomass. Health impacts of existing plants are within the scope.
- Adjust wording in scope document to “consider GHG emissions, potential benefits of private forestland and associated other impacts like public health, air quality, etc.”. Recommendations to list out other questions there.
- Recommendation to bring in representatives from Ryegate and McNeil to speak about air quality impacts of facilities. Also encourage group to invite member of communities around facilities that breath the air to speak.
- Comment that B & C in scope questions seem jumbled together. Recommendation to keep B focused on expansion to electric generation and keep C as physical expansion related to things like district heating/co-generation.

- Recommendation to bring in someone from American Lung Association or other groups that have done recent research in the area of impacts biomass burning on human health.
- Question raised about where the line is for this task group in making recommendations, and regulations through the Act 248 process. Response that to address this, the first set of questions in the scope document is focused on future incentives and expansion, while the second set of questions is focused on what the regulatory tools are and whether they are adequate.
- Question raised about impacts of biomass burning on pollutants in the land and water. Comment that most of the questions listed currently are focused on air quality, so if the Task Group is interested in focusing on pollutants in land and water, then that should be added to the list of scope questions.
- It was raised that a distinction should be drawn between procurement (where are we getting the material) vs. production (impacts carbon calculations); these two things should be teased apart.
- Raised that this group should also consider fossil fuel use in drying green wood for use in biomass energy generation. Task Group member raised that chips are dried as they are fed into the combustion chamber (first stage of combustion), so there is no active drying stage for either Ryegate or McNeil.
- Suggestion to add to listed considerations the feed stock used for production of biomass.

9:00 AM Dr. Bill Keeton Reviewed [Key Takeaways](#) on how we maximize the benefits of wood bioenergy.

- Task Group members discussed key takeaways and asked questions related to presentation.

9:30 AM Return to Scope and Proposed Questions if Needed

- Task Group members discussed how the Key Takeaways relate to the scope and proposed questions.

9:45 AM Next Steps

- Begin to compile a list of questions for representatives from McNeil facility.
- Recommendation to bring in Brett Butler (researcher with USFS) as a speaker.

9:50 AM Public Comment

- Cheryl Joy Lipton provided public comment. Full comments can be viewed in the meeting recording.
- Annette Smith provided public comment. Full comments can be viewed in the meeting recording.

10:00 AM Adjourn