

Written Comments: Climate Council

October 5, 2026

1) Leendert Huisman

Topic area: Biomass, Wood energy

To the members of Vermont's Climate Council,

The Global Warming Solutions Act directs Vermont to reduce its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and Vermont has elected to meet that directive by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources. That has been a very unfortunate decision because there is no relationship between renewables and GHGs: some Renewables emit little or no GHGs, others emit at least as much as the worst fossil fuels. The Global Warming Solutions Act does not dictate the use of renewables; in fact, it does not mention them at all except for the one sentence in which it asks for a "wise use of renewable resources".

That admonition has been ignored by Vermont which now advocates, at the government level, an (increased) use of wood from trees as a source of energy. Wood, when burned to produce energy, emits more GHGs than coal as well as many medically dangerous pollutants. Replacing fossil fuels by wood does the opposite of what the Global Warming Solutions Act asks for; it increases the emission of Greenhouse Gases.

That wood should be classified with the fossil fuels when considering Greenhouse Gas emissions has been well known and extensively documented in the scientific literature for well over a decade. Detailed analyses can be found, for example, in articles by Holtsmark et al. (2013), Ter-Mikaelian et al. (2015) and Sterman et al. (2018, 2022). I have attached to this email two more recent ones. The latest one, by Mackey et al. (2025), represents the most recent and most detailed understanding of the harmful effect that using wood as an energy source has on our environment and the global climate. The title of the article, Burning Forest Biomass Is Not an Effective Climate Mitigation Response and Conflicts With Biodiversity Adaptation, encapsulates the general message of the article fairly well, with the article itself providing the reasons that led the authors to their conclusion. The technical aspects of the study were presented in the article by Keith et al. (2022). The latter, in turn, relies on a mathematical model, the details of which are collected in the summary material for the main article and that I can forward to you if desired.

I urge this Council, and, therefore, also the Vermont government, to a) rethink its decision to use wood as an alternative to fossil fuels, b) to phase out its support for wood energy, and c) to clearly label commercial wood (pellets, cord wood) as harmful to the environment and people's health. I will attend EAN's Annual Network Summit in September and I will be happy to talk to you more about the reality of GHGs emitted by burning wood.

Sincerely,

Leendert Huisman

Attachments:

[Burning Forest Biomass Is Not an Effective Climate Mitigation Response and Conflicts With Biodiversity Adaptation](#), by B. G. Mackey, D. B. Lindenmayer, H. Keith, J. de Bie

[Evaluating the mitigation effectiveness of forests managed for conservation versus commodity production using an Australian example](#), by Heather Keith, Brendan Mackey, Zoltan Kun, Martin Mikoláš, Marek Svitok, Miroslav Svoboda