

MASSACHUSETTS FOREST WATCH

House Bill 4433 or the “Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership” is a publicly subsidized commercial logging and biomass burning enterprise masquerading as concern for nature. (Despite claims otherwise, increased biomass burning is still an integral part of this effort)

Only if duped would conscientious Massachusetts citizens voluntarily go along with this counterproductive proposal that would rob scarce taxpayer dollars to build an infrastructure for increased industrial logging and biomass burning that would degrade the Massachusetts environment. This statement from the New England Forestry Foundation (who advise the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership) helps illuminate the underlying motives of the alleged land “conservation” claims in this proposal:

“It’s hard to sell New England Forestry Foundation memberships on the notion that we harvest trees. We have to frame it that we protect land — we have to go at it obliquely.”

~Whitney Beals, New England Forestry Foundation
www.maforests.org/NEFF.pdf p. 9

Contrary to public understanding, most foresters are not paid to protect forests, they are usually paid to prepare cutting plans or for other activities that facilitate logging. Consequently, their opinions are usually biased in favor of extraction instead of protecting the other critical forest functions such as carbon sequestration, clean air, clean water, scenic beauty, undisturbed wildlife habitat, spiritual sanctuary, recreation opportunities, etc. which are all degraded by logging. All the clearcuts shown at the link below were cut with promises of “sustainable forestry” practices and were approved by licensed foresters:

www.maforests.org

When we humans log a forest, 99.9% of the time we are cutting for wood and money, so we should not kid ourselves and others that we are doing so to “help” the forest or nature. Quite to the contrary, logging damages the forest ecology. Nobody is saying never cut a tree, but many are rightly saying that there is no logical justification for an increase in cutting at taxpayer expense, particularly if we sincerely care about the climate, air quality and other important forest values.

Importantly, a forest left in peace to grow without logging is by far the best forest “management” decision that can be made regarding carbon impacts. Short of that scenario, the less cutting, the better. Here is a report showing how logging affects forest carbon. See figures 2 and 3 for a summary if you don’t want to read the whole report:

www.maforests.org/UVM.pdf

Even if it is being played down by those who stand to benefit financially, it is important to remember the prime motivation behind this proposal is unsurprisingly about money. Initially, the proposal expects \$30 million in taxpayer funds through \$6 million in State and \$24 million in Federal public subsidies to create a logging and biomass burning infrastructure in currently beautiful but now threatened Franklin and Berkshire Counties in western MA. It is important to realize that if this infrastructure is put in place, it would be almost impossible to undo, even once the negative impacts become apparent.

Ironically, the supposed benefits used to sell this proposal, such as increased tourism and recreation, fishing, conservation of forests, water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat, water and air purification, and carbon storage would all in fact be degraded by the true intent and main focus of this effort, increased logging and biomass burning.

All the nice sounding “green” words used to sell the plan such as “local” and “sustainable” are a sales pitch to get well intentioned citizens to lower their guard. Keep in mind, all of the “local” clearcutting in the photos at the link above was pitched as “sustainable forestry” by licensed foresters who will fight tooth and nail against any proposed common sense regulations that would genuinely improve forestry practices.

Public subsidies are meant to encourage activities that benefit the public. Much of the public sees value in public subsidies for authentic protection of forests and genuinely cleaner and “greener” energy options such as solar, geothermal, conservation and efficiency which provide a public benefit. However, increased logging and biomass burning as proposed in House Bill 4433 provides no real public benefits and instead just increases public costs.

Tree-fueled biomass energy (including CHP and thermal) has a higher carbon footprint (even when accounting for forest growth) and greater emission rates of many dangerous conventional pollutants (even with the best available pollution controls) than the dirtiest fossil fuels. Additionally, the increased logging required would increase the ecological damage and landscape impacts to our critically important forests. So why in the world should the public pay for it?

Unfortunately, the modern day “greenwashing” problem goes deeper than many would like to admit. Even some of the bigger so-called “green” groups like the Nature Conservancy who supporters lean on for PR have become big businesses and are too closely tied financially to industry and government to be trusted to put the genuine protection of nature ahead of the protection of their finances. Yes, this is disturbing, but see for yourself at the link below:

www.maforests.org/TNC.pdf

Another good reason to reject this proposal is that it would create a “partnership” with the US Forest Service (not to be confused with the respectable US Park Service). Please look at this link to see how poorly the US Forest Service treats beautiful White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. (25 MB) This is not the type of forest “management” that people in beautiful Franklin and Berkshire Counties would likely appreciate. All of these damaging National Forest clearcuts were also labelled “sustainable forestry” and approved by licensed foresters.

www.maforests.org/WMNF.pdf

"The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership" or House Bill 4433 would result in increased carbon emissions, air pollution and forest damage in order to provide a financial benefit for an extremely narrow group of private interests. Such private gain at great public expense (financial and otherwise) is the exact opposite of what public subsidies are meant to do, and for this reason among many others, House Bill 4433 should be rejected.

Lastly, if the MA legislature would like to provide \$6 million subsidies to genuinely promote and improve tourism, recreation, fishing, conservation of forests, water supply recharge and protection, wildlife habitat, water and air purification, and carbon storage, the new legislation must explicitly prohibit any of the funds being used directly or indirectly for the counterproductive and divisive poison pills of supporting or expanding logging, biomass burning, or the spread of associated false industry propaganda that claims such activities benefit the environment.

No to blank checks from the public to help private companies degrade nature under the guise of helping it.

Chris Matera, P.E.
Massachusetts Forest Watch
Northampton, MA
www.maforests.org
413-341-3878

Chris Matera, P.E. is a civil engineer and the founder of Massachusetts Forest Watch, a volunteer citizens group formed to protect New England forests and advocate for genuinely “green” energy choices

Links Below:

Timber Industry Propaganda:

<https://vault.sierraclub.org/sierra/200009/timber.asp>

“Timberspeak”, Logging Propaganda:

http://www.maforests.org/Timberspeak-Timber_Industry_Propaganda.pdf

No Logging Provides Highest Forest Carbon Storage II:

www.maforests.org/No%20Logging_More_C_sequestration.pdf

New England Forests Sequestering Carbon:

<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/11/growing-strong/>

Logging Destabilizes Soil Carbon:

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2014-12/dc-ldf120214.php

Dr. Chivian, Forests and Logging:

http://www.maforests.org/Dr_Eric_Chivian_Water_Supply.pdf

Fighting For Wood:

www.biomassmagazine.com/articles/5021/nh-plants-petition-for-intervention-in-laidlaw-ppa

Fighting For Wood II:

<http://www.risiinfo.com/press-release/risis-wood-biomass-market-report-dispels-overabundant-waste-wood-myth/>

Biomass Never Carbon Neutral From Trees:

www.maforests.org/Biomass%20Assumptions.pdf

American Lung Association, MA, Opposed to Biomass

www.maforests.org/ALA%20Support%20of%20Greenfield%20Biomass%20Moratorium%20Bylaw.pdf

Schulze Et Al: “Biomass not carbon neutral”

www.maforests.org/Biomass%20energy%20-%20not%20sustainable%20or%20carbon%20neutral.pdf

90 Scientists Letter to Congress “Count Biomass Carbon”:

www.maforests.org/90scientistsletter.pdf

Reasons NOT to install woodchip boilers:

<http://burningissues.org/car-www/science/Climate/woodchip-merkel06.htm>

78 Scientists to EPA, Biomass Bad for Forests & Carbon:

www.maforests.org/76%20Scientist%20-%20Biomass%202015.pdf

Dr Schlesinger, EPA should follow the science:

<http://thehill.com/opinion/op-ed/209863-on-biomass-epa-should-follow-the-science>

European Union, Scientists Against

www.maforests.org/EU_NO_BIOMASS.pdf

Biomass Carbon Realities, Dr Harmon, Dr Searchinger, Dr Moomaw:

www.maforests.org/CarbHMS.pdf

Logging, Bio-energy and Carbon Emissions:

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/06/130611122103.htm

Biogenic Carbon, Same impacts:

www.maforests.org/BiogenicGeologic%20August%202011.pdf

Science Journal “Biomass Accounting Error”

www.maforests.org/SCIENCE.pdf

European Environment Agency, Biomass Accounting Error:

www.eea.europa.eu/about-us/governance/scientific-committee/sc-opinions/opinions-on-scientific-issues/sc-opinion-on-greenhouse-gas

Dr Eric Johnson, “Biomass Carbon Neutrality” Mythbuster:

www.maforests.org/Carbon.pdf

Doctors Against Biomass:

www.lung.org/assets/documents/advocacy-archive/health-organizations-letter-biomass.pdf

NRDC: Don’t use Forests for Fuel:

http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/slyutse/new_nrdc_video_shows_risks_of.html

Greenpeace, Fueling a Biomass:

www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/recent/Burning-trees-for-energy-puts-Canadian-forests-and-climate-at-risk-Greenpeace/

Environmental Lunacy:

www.economist.com/news/business/21575771-environmental-lunacy-europe-fuel-future

Incineration and the Climate, Energy Justice:

<http://www.energyjustice.net/files/biomass/climate.pdf>

Biomass Health Impacts, Hampshire District Medical Society:

www.maforests.org/HDMS.pdf

Biomass Health Impacts, Physicians For Social Responsibility:

www.maforests.org/PSR.pdf

Biomass Health Impacts, Dr. William Sammons:

www.maforests.org/Sammons.pdf

Biomass Health Impacts, Grave Concerns:

www.maforests.org/GrRec420.pdf

Biomass Health Impacts, Asthma NE:

www.boston.com/news/health/articles/2010/04/26/scourge_of_asthma_is_acute_in_ne/