



## **Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack Recognizes Biomass as Essential in Reducing Risk of Forest Fires**

*USDA Signs MOU with Biomass Power Association and Three Similar Groups, Pledges to Promote Bioenergy*

**September 11, 2013 – Washington, DC** – The Biomass Power Association (BPA) today signed an agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture to collaborate on ways to promote energy from wood, both in the production of renewable energy and in efforts to reduce the risk of forest fires. At a press conference this morning, Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden signed a Memorandum of Understanding with BPA, Pellet Fuels Institute, Biomass Thermal Energy Council and Alliance for Green Heat.

"Today's announcements will help us find innovative ways to use leftover wood to create renewable energy and support good jobs in rural America," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "Wood to Energy efforts are a part of our 'all of the above' energy strategy. Appropriately scaled wood energy facilities also support our efforts to remove hazardous fuels and reduce the risks of catastrophic wildfires."

The MOU outlines a collaborative partnership among the four groups to "establish the basis for cooperative programs, communications, technological advances, and project development toward an expanded use of wood energy in the U.S." The agreement will bolster efforts that are already underway to keep forests healthy through the use of wood for energy (see below).

Bob Cleaves, President and CEO of Biomass Power Association, made the following statement at the press conference:

"I want to thank the Secretary on this important initiative.

"The biomass power industry is America's best kept renewable energy secret – but we want more Americans to appreciate the economic and environmental power of bioenergy.

"For decades, we have been the sleeping giant of electricity, powering 1.8 million homes and businesses nationwide and employing 9,000 Americans full-time.

"And we are on a roll. Since 2010, our industry has invested nearly \$4 billion, created thousands of jobs, and increased our capacity by 20 percent. All using woody residues and by-products that otherwise contribute to forest fires or go unused.

“USDA’s support has been critically important. This partnership with USDA is a big step in raising awareness about bioenergy. So is the first-ever National Bioenergy Day, taking place at facilities around the country on October 17.

“We appreciate the support from USDA and look forward to strengthening this partnership, which will benefit our industry as much as it will benefit America’s forests.”

The MOU will build on a successful model of USDA and U.S. Forest Service partnerships with bioenergy companies to maintain healthy forests on federal lands. Several examples of successful partnerships between the USDA and biomass power producers follow:

**COLORADO:** The Eagle Valley project by Evergreen Clean Energy will open this fall in Gypsum, Colorado. It will use woody biomass from 2500 acres of land ravaged by beetle kill and at high risk of wildfire to power close to 8,000 local homes and businesses. A USDA Stewardship Contract and a \$40 million Rural Utilities Service loan guarantee made this possible.

**NEW YORK:** A USDA collaboration in New York with ReEnergy Holdings in the North Country region of New York is helping fund an innovative public/private partnership to invest in energy crops grown on marginal farmland and used as fuel to produce electricity.

**ARIZONA:** The White Mountain Stewardship Project is a partnership between Novo Power LLC in Snowflake, Arizona, and the U.S. Forest Service, created largely as a result of the Rodeo-Chediski fire of 2002. The ten-year contract was established to thin approximately 150,000 acres in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. This program provides approximately 155,000 bone-dry tons of ponderosa pine chips annually to the region, enough to power approximately 20,000 homes and businesses.

**CALIFORNIA:** Avista, a biomass company based in Northeast Washington State, received at its Woodland facility in California logs that were damaged by wildfire in the Lake Tahoe area as a result of a U.S. Forest Service partnership. The Stockton, California area also yielded wood byproducts from trees infected by Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) and the pathogen Sudden Oak Death (SOD).

**MONTANA:** Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls, Montana, generates heat for mill operations and sells 2.5 MW of power to Flathead Electric Cooperative. A USDA partnership helped Stoltze replace a 30-year old wood boiler.

**OREGON:** Biomass One, a 30 MW woody-fired biomass power plant, is located in the Rogue River Valley in southern Oregon that includes federally managed lands such as Siskiyou National Forest, the Umpqua National Forest, the Klamath National Forest and the Medford District of the Bureau of Land Management.

This year, an estimated 25% of Biomass One's fuel consumption will consist of material processed and recovered as a byproduct from forest operations. U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management stewardship projects combined yield around 30,000 tons of woody biomass in the region each year.

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*Biomass power is a \$1 billion industry with 80 facilities in 20 states and provides over 15,500 jobs nationwide. Power plants are predominantly located in rural communities, creating thousands of jobs and producing millions in revenue for small towns. Biomass power is a clean and abundant source of electricity that will allow states to pursue even more aggressive goals for increasing their use of renewable energy in the future.*