

The following letter was submitted to the Wall Street Journal by Bob Cleaves on July 26, 2012:

To the Wall Street Journal Editor:

I am writing in response to the July 24 article, “Wood-Fired Plants Generate Violations.” I appreciate the Journal’s attempt to relate the biomass industry’s perspective in the story. However, I take issue with the overall characterization of an entire industry based on one company and more minor incidents at a handful of other facilities.

The biomass industry is committed to compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations. While every industry has its outliers and minor compliance issues, the vast majority of biomass facilities are clean operations that provide numerous jobs, both at the facilities and with biomass fuel suppliers, and provide renewable energy to their communities.

For example, California’s San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which administers some of the most stringent emission regulations in the country, stated yesterday, in part, “Well-managed biomass plants provide an effective, lower emission alternative to open air burning of agricultural waste.” Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency recognized California’s Placer County Air Pollution Control District with its 2010 Clean Air Excellence Award for a public-private partnership that utilizes biomass to manage local forests, create clean energy and prevent forest fires.

Several of the facilities cited in the article began operating decades ago, long before the term “renewable energy” entered our vernacular. They are too old to qualify for the very tax incentives that would help them modernize, and they struggle to attract outside investments.

Biomass is a critical renewable energy resource that rids forests and landfills of waste while providing reliable power to homes and businesses. It is a base-load, 24/7 energy source that provides consistent power independent of weather or time of day, and thus deserves benefits equal to other renewable energy sources.

The biomass industry provides important environmental benefits and assists our nation in diversifying its energy sources. Biomass fuels generate lower nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon dioxide

emissions than coal, and mainstream scientific studies confirm that biomass power is indeed sustainable and carbon neutral. Our members are held to the highest standards of environmental compliance and expect to be.

Bob Cleaves
President and CEO, Biomass Power Association