

Anti-Biomass Incineration and Forest Protection Campaign

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Biomass Incinerator Opponents Face Off Against Industry and State in Florida Trial

CONTACT:

Meg Sheehan, Spokesperson
c/o 4 Library Court, Washington, DC 20003
email: meg@ecolaw.biz, cell 508-259-9154

A trial being held this week in Gainesville, Florida, pits anti-biomass opponents against the state and an out-of-state company. Citizens are challenging a state agency approval of Gainesville Renewable Energy Center incinerator, being proposed by the Massachusetts based international joint venture, American Renewables, LLC. The citizen leading the coalition, Dr. Thomas Bussing, former mayor of Gainesville, intervened to enter testimony in the trial in order to prevent harm to human health and the environment from the incinerator. The GREC incinerator will burn trees to make electricity.

Opponents of the incinerator assert that local residents, particularly children, will suffer harm from the toxic emissions generated by burning wood at the Gainesville site.

Dr. Ron Saff, a medical doctor from Tallahassee, Florida who specializes in asthma, provided deposition testimony in the case. According to Dr. Saff, “the pollution from biomass plants causes asthma and heart attacks, cancer, shortens lives and poses a health risk to Gainesville residents.”

According to the GREC permit application and the citizen petition, air pollutants from the incinerator will include particulate matter, including PM 2.5, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), acid gases, sulfur compounds, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, PCBs and dioxin-like compounds. The opponents’ expert testimony will show that these toxins are a danger to children and will become airborne and deposited on local residents and agricultural crops. Testimony will also show that the incinerator will violate state laws prohibiting objectionable odors, poses a risk of fires in the wood chip piles, and will emit dangerous greenhouse gases. The American Lung Association opposes wood burning biomass plants because of their public health impacts. <http://www.saveamericasforests.org/Forests%20-%20Incinerators%20-%20Biomass/Documents/Human%20Health/ALA%20national%20letter.pdf>

Citizens around the U.S. and the globe oppose biomass incinerators because they harm the public health and make global warming worse. This week, activists in Scotland protested four environmentally destructive wood burning biomass incinerators by Forth Energy in Scotland.

According to Campaign spokesperson, Meg Sheehan, “citizens everywhere are outraged that their taxpayer and ratepayer money is being used to subsidize the biomass boondoggle. These plants are promoted as “clean and green” energy but they are neither. Instead, they emit toxic chemicals, burn forests, dry up rivers, and make climate change worse. The GREC facility will emit more carbon dioxide per mega watt than burning coal. The science and expert testimony shows the threats to the public health and environment and regulators need to act consistently with this science,” she said.

The record of the hearing can be viewed here:

http://www.doah.state.fl.us/internet/search/docket.cfm?RequestTimeout=500&CaseNo=09-006641&Petitioner=IN%20RE:%20%20GAINESVILLE%20RENEWABLE%20ENERGY%20CENTER,%20LLC&Respondent=*&URLString=0