

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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Environmental Groups Reject Dominion Power and Enviva Green Biomass Energy Claims

*Groups Warn That Large-Scale Biomass Burning is Bad for Our Climate, Community
Health and our Forests; Sustainable Forestry Initiative Certifies Greenwashing*

Today, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, Dogwood Alliance, and Heartwood challenged Dominion Virginia Power's claims that their plan to convert two coal fired plants is "clean" and "renewable." The groups, with members in Virginia and across the Southeast describe Dominion's environmental claims made last week in announcing a partnership with wood pellet manufacturer Enviva as misleading. Danna Smith of the Dogwood Alliance said: "The large-scale burning of wood for energy is neither clean nor green and could actually result in increased carbon emissions, accelerating rather than mitigating climate change. Equally as troublesome are plans to "certify" wood under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which certifies destructive logging practices like large scale clearcutting and the conversion of natural forests to plantations as 'sustainable.'"

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification scheme, which has been adopted by Enviva to "ensure" that its wood pellet and wood waste manufacturing is green, is largely rejected by national, regional and local conservation organizations as lacking credibility. The SFI has been hotly criticized as certifying the worst of the worst forest management practices including large-scale clearcutting, the conversion of natural forests to plantations, ditching and draining of wetlands, logging of endangered forests, and the widespread use of toxic chemicals in forest management.

Additionally, Enviva's pellet mills threaten North Carolina and Virginia ecosystems. "Pellet mills in themselves pose grave threats to Virginia's forests. Combining this with large volume biomass incineration and even larger levels of pellet exportation is an environmentally lethal combination for the Commonwealth." Ernie Reed, Heartwood's Council Chair.

On October 19, Enviva signed a contract with Dominion Virginia Power to supply biomass to two of the utilities power plants in Southeast Virginia. Enviva claims that the biomass will be sustainably produced,

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but the amount of wood necessary to fuel two 50 megawatt facilities will have a massive environmental footprint in the Commonwealth. Enviva is already producing large amounts of wood pellets to export to European utility companies. Increased industrial logging will detrimentally impact the state's forests ability to sequester and store carbon, protect water resources and shelter wildlife.

Therese Vick, of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League pointed out that burning biomass produces emissions which negatively impact public health the same way that burning coal does. "Many health organizations and medical professionals have come out in opposition to the incineration of biomass. Exchanging one type of dirty energy for another and wrapping it in a green quilt doesn't change the fact that burning biomass releases carbon dioxide, creates dangerous particulate matter and dioxins."

Biomass utilities have detrimental impacts on the health and quality of life of people living in the vicinity of the plant. In addition to releasing large amount of greenhouse gases in the burning of wood, other pollutantss include small particulate matter, dioxin, and NO2. Various health professionals and organizations in the South and across the nation have come out in opposition to these facilities.

The environmental organizations all agree that large-scale forest biomass for electricity will not get us on the right path to a green energy future. Instead, they say utility companies need to stay focused on moving away from coal and towards energy conservation and efficiency and real renewable energy such as solar, wind and geothermal.

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Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is a regional community-based non-profit environmental organization. Our founding principles are earth stewardship, environmental democracy, social justice and community empowerment. For more information please visit www.bredl.org.

Dogwood Alliance is increasing protection for millions of acres of Southern forests by transforming the way corporations, landowners and communities value them for their climate, wildlife and water benefits. Dogwood Alliance has revolutionized the environmental practices of some of the world's largest corporations. For more information on the organization please visit, www.dogwoodalliance.org.

Heartwood (www.heartwood.org) is a cooperative network of grassroots groups, individuals, and businesses working to protect and sustain healthy forests and vital human communities in the nation's heartland and in the central and southern Appalachians.