

Foreword

Southern forests represent an important potential energy resource. While research is needed to help users know the most efficient conversion processes and most beneficial uses of woody biomass, one key to optimum community energy decisions is enhanced public awareness and knowledge. Since it is not economical to transport woody biomass great distances, the leaders and residents of communities near working forests are important audiences for outreach and education efforts. Members of these communities will be the ones to decide whether to support using wood to generate electricity. Potential new markets for woody biomass will send ripples of economic activity from forest landowners through local communities and across the South.

The Wood to Energy Outreach Program has produced a number of fact sheets, case studies, community economic profiles, and an introductory slide presentation to help interested citizens and community leaders learn about the potential for woody biomass in their area. We urge you to use these resources in your role as a Biomass Ambassador when you work to increase understanding and foster informed discussions about using wood for energy production. A variety of outreach efforts are possible and encouraged, from presentations to civic groups and decision-makers to newspaper articles or educational booths at community events.

Biomass Ambassadors will play an important role in helping residents of southern communities become aware of the benefits and costs of using wood for energy. Wood will not be an appropriate choice in every southern community, nor will it be ideal for all uses. Careful analysis, planning, and public deliberation will be required in order for communities to find their own best solutions. We thank you for making this commitment to increase public awareness and knowledge around this important issue.

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