



WOOD^{to} ENERGY



Biomass Ambassador Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve your agency or organization and community as a Biomass Ambassador. This guide provides suggestions and ideas to help you share information, raise awareness, and answer questions about using wood for energy production in the South.

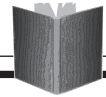
The resources in this guide are part of the Wood to Energy Community Outreach Program, developed through cooperative agreements between the University of Florida, Southern States Energy Board, and USDA Forest Service—Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry. The purpose of the program is to increase public awareness of the use of woody biomass for energy in southern communities. We have created a number of resources and are making them available to you in this guide. Our program goals are

- to introduce communities to the concept of using wood for energy,
- to improve public knowledge about the benefits and costs of using woody biomass, and
- to facilitate the discussion of realistic proposals for using wood for heat, power, and electricity.

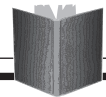
A companion manual, Sustainable Forestry for Bioenergy and Bio-based Products, was produced by the Southern Forest Research Partnership. It includes a variety of fact sheets and online learning modules that can complement your outreach activities.

As you begin your work as a Biomass Ambassador, we suggest that you proceed by using the following steps:

1. Identify communities in your state or region where wood represents a reasonable source of energy. Ideal communities are ones where forest cover is still high and the human population is growing. This is what we refer to as the wildland-urban interface. We have identified several counties in each state where wood might be a feasible energy option, based on these suitability criteria. This information is included in the first section, "Get Started." While we realize there are other communities in your state that might also have good opportunities for using woody biomass, this list serves as a starting place.



These materials can be found at <http://www.interfacesouth.org/woodybiomass>.



The companion materials are located on the Forest Bio-energy Web site at: <http://www.forestbioenergy.net>.

A comprehensive Web-based encyclopedia of woody biomass information can be found at: <http://www.forestencyclopedia.net/Encyclopedia/bioenergy>.

2. Build a local team of people in your state or region that have an interest in using wood for energy. We encourage you to include representatives from the state forest agency; the cooperative extension service; the wood industry; the utility or power industry; people who are currently using wood for heat and power in schools, sawmills, prisons, or cabinet shops; and people from research, environmental, and community organizations. You need not all agree on how best to use wood, or even that wood should be used. But a common commitment to using sustainable sources of energy will be helpful. Additional suggestions about whom to contact are included in “Get Started.” Talk to your team about their ideas for using woody biomass, share these materials with them, and discuss ways to work together to promote public awareness of wood as an energy resource.
3. Begin designing your outreach activities by first analyzing the community to understand how much residents and leaders already understand about woody biomass energy. If they are ready to propose a new wood-fueled power plant, for example, your presentation and audience should be different than if they do not believe they have enough wood to heat a school. Contact a few key players in each community to get a sense of who should be involved in your outreach effort, whether it should involve the public, and what objectives you should aim to reach. From our experience, it is critical to a) make sure the state forest agency supports this initiative in this community, b) have an initial meeting with community leaders to explain the opportunities and possibilities, and c) launch your outreach activities with their support.

Once a community has a realistic proposal for using wood for energy it is easier to attract public attention. Therefore, it may make sense to work with utilities, businesses, and industries to identify who could potentially use wood in an expansion or conversion of their power system. Before people can imagine the possibility of using wood, however, some awareness is needed. So where do you start? The second section, “Plan Activities,” will get you started with your community outreach by helping you to assess the community needs, develop goals and objectives for your program, and begin to think about outreach tools.

4. Choose outreach tools that will help you achieve your goals and objectives. A host of possibilities exists for public outreach (e.g., press releases, workshops, symposia, community forums, exhibits, etc.), some of which are described in detail in the third section, “Outreach Tools.” If you are interested in developing a presentation that explains the benefits and costs of using wood for energy, some examples and guidelines are included in the “Presentation” section. We suggest that a variety of experts, including some of your team members, contribute to this presentation if possible. By representing various perspectives (e.g., forest sustainability, economic impacts, technology), you can help participants gain a more sufficient understanding of the complexity of this issue. Using experts in your presentation will also provide credibility. Select the combination of fact sheets, case studies, and community economic profiles that will be appropriate

to distribute and assemble folders with handouts. Samples of these materials are included in this guide and copies can be ordered for your outreach activities. See “Logistics” for ordering details.



The accompanying CD and Web site provide a slide presentation that you can modify to meet your needs.

5. Record your activities to help us track the impacts of your efforts. This will help us provide appropriate assistance, help other Ambassadors learn from your ideas and experiences, and enable us to improve these materials. The “Logistics” section explains how this can be done.

6. Use the “Resources” and “Appendix” sections in this guide to help you design outreach activities and answer questions about woody biomass in the South.

A Note on Perspective

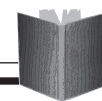
Our public perceptions research suggests that people do not know much about using wood for energy, nor about the energy systems used to generate power in general. Misconceptions abound. Providing science-based information for people

who hold misconceptions or opposing attitudes requires that you begin by acknowledging their ideas and concerns, then gently reveal why their reasoning is faulty, and offer a new perspective on the issue. This process is essential to helping defuse strongly held notions about climate change, air quality, and forest management, for example.

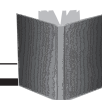
In some communities, the prospect of using wood for energy may be opposed by vocal citizens who are concerned about protecting and sustaining local forests. Indeed, most community leaders and foresters also want to keep local working forests in production and nearby conserved forests healthy through sustainable management. It is possible that the fear of losing local forests stems from a lack of trust in government or industry. Biomass Ambassadors should acknowledge these concerns and work with credible, trustworthy partners to convey helpful information about sustainable forestry, the sources of wood for an energy facility, and safeguards that can protect local forests. Both the information and the style of presentation become important factors for your work.

A question often asked by those concerned about the use of biomass is “Can urban and rural forests be sustainably managed for a variety of objectives and produce enough woody biomass to generate energy?” In order to answer this question, a careful examination of sources, supplies, costs, and forest management strategies is necessary. In addition to a variety of fact sheets, we developed community economic profiles for each southern state to help people compare quantities and sources of wood in selected counties with their own location.

In addition to having factual information, Biomass Ambassadors should convey an appropriately humble yet helpful attitude. A strongly persuasive message is likely to convince those who were predisposed to agree with using wood, which is not a very big portion of the population. A more moderate approach that suggests the consideration of multiple perspectives is more likely to increase understanding among fence-sitters and ambivalent participants. This multiple-perspectives approach is also the only effective strategy for working with those who initially oppose using wood for energy. It can help reduce their defensive posture and create a more open atmosphere for debating all aspects of the woody biomass questions. Our experience with community forums (highlighted in “Outreach Tools”) demonstrates the benefits of launching public outreach with this non-advocacy approach and includes some examples of how an Ambassador’s attitude displays itself through word choices and behaviors.



The fact sheet, *Common Concerns*, provides an explanation of common misconceptions about woody biomass.



Woody biomass supply and economic impact information from each state can be found in the “Community Economic Profiles” section behind the seventh tab of this guide and also on the Web site at <http://www.interfacesouth.org/woodybiomass>. An explanation of this analysis is in the section, “Appendix,” and on the Web.

Finally, it may be useful to recall what we are aiming for. Many Americans are increasingly concerned about global climate change, energy security, and American reliance on fossil fuels. Their lack of knowledge, however, stymies and often frustrates them. New ideas and good solutions may be difficult to imagine. Many people care, but feel helpless and unable to participate in creating new patterns of resource use. First and foremost, this program is intended to build awareness and knowledge among a concerned but powerless public. We suggest making information available in such a way that people are pleasantly and painlessly informed, respected, and engaged.

Why is public engagement the ultimate goal of this program? Because moving toward sustainability will require that all of us begin to think and question assumptions in a fresh way. The acceptance of new opportunities and solutions will be more likely if people understand the issues and consequences. While corporations and governments could strike out into the new territory of sustainable energy resources, they are not likely to make bold moves without the support of clients, stakeholders, and voters.

Most people are concerned about the future, not just this generation's immediate future but the future of this planet and its inhabitants. Most people want to be a part of creating solutions that are good for the environment, the economy, and their communities. Obtaining information is the first step toward this engagement. These materials will help you paint a picture of possibilities, answer questions, and empower people to contribute to a public dialogue on sustainable energy resources.