



August 9, 2011

California Air Resources Board  
James Goldstene, Executive Officer  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95812

**RE: Comments on Biomass Reporting Provisions in the Proposed 15-day Changes to the Mandatory Reporting Regulation**

Dear Mr. Goldstene,

The undersigned organizations appreciate the additions that ARB staff has made to the Mandatory Reporting Regulation (MRR) in response to our concerns regarding tracking and reporting emissions from biomass combustion, particularly material sourced from forests. We offer the following comments to help ensure that the reporting regulation gathers information in a form that will be most useful to monitor for adverse impacts and to inform future policymaking.

**§ 95103 Greenhouse Gas Reporting Requirements**

The additions to section 95103(j) require that woody biomass sourced from forests include basic information about the permit governing harvest, the mass of the material, and basic contact information. These new reporting requirements will help track emissions from biomass back to the source, and generate information about the sources of woody biomass that can help inform

efforts to ensure sustainability of woody biomass utilization, determine the upstream carbon impacts of woody biomass utilization, monitor for adverse environmental impacts, and inform future policy decisions. The utility of this information would be significantly improved by gathering three additional pieces of information:

- 1) **The type of forest material collected and combusted.** As many of our organizations suggested in a letter to ARB on April 8, 2011 (attached), knowing generally what type of forest material is being utilized would help inform future policy discussions regarding the upstream carbon impacts of woody biomass utilization. For example, there are significantly different carbon cycling implications for the combustion of harvest debris that was destined for a burn pile versus the burning of whole trees (which could create a carbon debt for decades, even relative to displaced fossil fuels). We continue to recommend that ARB gather specific information about the type of forest material collected for biomass combustion, categorized by type<sup>1</sup> (e.g., tops or branches, slash, or boles), size and weight. While specific information about the physical characteristics of forest material is critical to understanding what feedstocks are being utilized for energy generation, determining the carbon impacts of forest biomass combustion and how the Cap and Trade program is affecting forest management decisions will require information on the specific forest areas and forest practices generating that biomass.
- 2) **A geographic indication of the source of the forest biomass.** While we support the requirement to report the permit number associated with harvest under the California Forest Practice Rules or federal National Environmental Policy Act document, this information provides only a very general indication of where, when, and how the material was harvested. Timber harvest plans, for example, may cover many square miles, include numerous management actions, and be implemented over multiple years. In order to make any use of the information, ARB will need to contact the Department of Forestry and retrieve the necessary documents and maps (which are often available only in hard copy), as well as contact various National Forests throughout California. We suggest that it would be vastly more efficient to require the reporting entity to provide ARB with the location information in a usable format—for example, based on collection or source location—rather than necessitating an additional layer of data collection before the data can be used in any meaningful way.

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the attached letter from April for further detail on useful sub-classifications of forest biomass.

- 3) **Include a reporting category for forest biomass from outside of California.** While this may be a relatively modest source of material, there should be a separate reporting category for material from Nevada, Oregon, or any other non-California source.

#### **Aggregation of Reporting Data for Biomass Facilities with Emissions between 10,000 and 25,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>E Annually**

We understand that facilities with emissions of greater than 10,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e but less than the 25,000 metric ton CO<sub>2</sub>e threshold for inclusion in the Cap and Trade program are required to report their gross annual emissions, but are not subject to the more detailed reporting requirements in the MRR. Given that we expect much of the growth in the biomass industry to be small facilities, we urge ARB to both report emissions from individual facilities and to aggregate the reporting from all such facilities in California so that we can monitor whether there are significant emissions increases coming from biomass facilities with emissions in this range.

#### **Adaptive Management**

We understand that mitigation of environmental impacts resulting from the Cap and Trade rule is expected to rely on an adaptive management program, which in turn will depend in part upon the information collected pursuant to the MRR. However, we point out that it is impossible to determine, prior to the development of the specific benchmarks and performance standards (e.g. the standards being developed in the LCFS Sustainability Working Group) required to make an adaptive management program effective, the extent to which the information collected pursuant to the MRR is adequate to implement that program. While our organizations will likely have additional recommendations with respect to this policy, especially in the context of the cap and trade regulation, we urge ARB to include a regular review of the forest biomass data it collects to determine if, among other things, increasing amounts or different types of woody biomass are being collected over time from the same locations. These reviews should also include any new scientific information, findings or methods that could enhance the analysis and understanding of the impacts that woody biomass utilization may have on greenhouse gas emissions and ecological sustainability and inform the policy regarding the most appropriate treatment of woody biomass in the cap and trade regulations. Finally, these reviews should be accompanied by an opportunity for review and input by outside experts and members of the public.

Once again, our organizations appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the MRR and look forward to continued work with you on this important issue.

Regards,

Paul Mason  
V.P., Policy and Incentives  
Pacific Forest Trust

Ann Chan  
Senior Climate Change Specialist  
The Wilderness Society

Michael Endicott  
Sustainability Advocate  
Sierra Club California

Tim O'Connor  
Director, California Climate and Energy Initiative  
Environmental Defense Fund

Peter Miller  
Senior Scientist  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Michelle Passero  
Senior Climate Policy Advisor  
The Nature Conservancy

Brian Nowicki  
California Climate Policy Director  
Center for Biological Diversity