

Biomass Facility Protested in Olympia

Local News

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Olympia, WA – On October 25, activists from Olympia Rising Tide hung two banners at the Evergreen State College in opposition to a proposed biomass gasification facility. Olympia Rising Tide opposes biomass because it is a false solution to climate change and would lead to a massive resurgence of clear-cut logging in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. The Evergreen State College is considering a biomass gasification facility as a replacement for the current natural gas facility that heats the school. The Washington Department of Natural Resources claims that biomass is carbon-neutral because emissions from the gasification process contribute to the already cycling stock of carbon that is being exchanged between the biosphere and the atmosphere as part of the earth's carbon cycle. Using this logic, even burning coal is carbon-neutral because the emissions contribute to the already cycling stock of carbon.

The biomass facility at Evergreen would supposedly only source slash (leftover scrap wood) from Forest Stewardship Council-certified small-scale woodlots. But Washington House Bill 2481 allows the Department of Natural Resources to create provisions in a biomass supply contract that are periodically adjusted for market conditions if the supplier invests over \$50 million in the project. In other words, DNR can change the agreement to allow clearcuts if they are more economically feasible. This provides Evergreen with a back-door strategy to get the cheapest wood possible, no matter the environmental cost. The timber industry loves biomass because it could breathe new life into a failing market. With the housing slump limiting the options for selling wood, Big Timber sees biomass as the innovation that's going to save their bank accounts. Olympia Rising Tide opposes biomass in solidarity with residents of Shelton, Port Townsend, Port Angeles, Forks, Aberdeen, Hoquiam, and Tacoma, who are also facing potential biomass facilities. We say no to biomass in Washington and no to biomass anywhere! "Cutting down and burning our forests is not a solution to climate change," says Jo Lillian of Olympia Rising Tide. "Biomass is a greenwashed false solution that distracts from the real work that needs to occur to stop climate change and curb energy consumption, namely ending war and dismantling capitalism. Natural gas isn't a viable heating fuel either, but replacing one form of pollution and eco-destruction with another isn't progress."