

Legacy Biomass Law Takes Effect

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Legislation to amend the Clean Energy Initiative will take effect today and the bill's prime sponsor says it represents a compromise which safeguards the environment and rural jobs. "Legacy biomass is as much about protecting jobs as it is about protecting the environment," said [Sen. Brian Hatfield](#), D-Raymond, chair of the Senate Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development committee. In passing this bill and signing it into law, the Legislature and the governor recognized that you can advance clean energy without eliminating hundreds of jobs that have been the lifeblood in small Washington communities for decades. - Brian Hatfield [Senate Bill 5575](#) will allow biomass facilities in operation before March 31, 1999, to qualify as eligible for renewable energy credits. Until now, facilities built before that date have been unable to sell the biomass energy generated in their power plants as renewable energy, putting them at a significant disadvantage. SB 5575 also adds organic by-products of pulping and the wood manufacturing process, known as black liquor, to the definition of biomass.

"To not allow products like black liquor to count as renewable energy, as other states do, puts these mills at a competitive disadvantage in bidding for contracts that require renewable energy use," said Hatfield. "The 1999 date was total arbitrary. No reason has ever been given as to why biomass facilities in operation before that were not eligible and it certainly would not be worth the hundreds of family wage jobs that would be lost at those mills." "Successful passage of ESSB 5575 recognizes the biomass energy we generate on site as renewable. This legislation will assist in maintaining the long-term economic viability of our Longview facility and thus preserve the hundreds of good family wage paying jobs at the facility," said Tim Haynes, vice president and mill manager of the Weyerhaeuser Longview Facility. "Weyerhaeuser would like to thank Sen. Hatfield for championing and overseeing successful passage of this most important piece of legislation." The bill was approved by the Senate and House of Representatives on 45-1 and 89-9 votes. It was signed into law by Gov. Chris Gregoire on March 7th.