



# National Association of Conservation Districts

November 15, 2018

Biomass Research and Development Technical Advisory Committee  
Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy  
Attn: Dr. Ian Rowe, Acting Designated Federal Officer  
1000 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Biomass Research and Development Technical Advisory Committee:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Conservation districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States.

Conservation districts are devoted to helping conserve all landscapes across our nation through proper stewardship of the land. Our forest lands have their share of unique natural resource concerns, specifically when it comes to the challenges of management across public and private forestlands at the watershed level. Conservation districts assist private landowners and coordinate with appropriate state and federal agencies to take a holistic approach to address natural resource concerns.

Hazardous fuels buildup is a serious threat nationwide. It threatens national forests, industrial and non-industrial private forestlands and the wildland-urban interface (WUI) regions. Excess woody biomass is increased by the long-term drought plaguing much of the country, which raises the dangers of devastating wildfires that destroy wildlife habitat and communities. Disease and insect infestation impose a danger on the future health of our forests. Conservation districts support national policy to address this growing issue, including reducing hazardous fuels buildup, utilizing innovative technologies to use woody biomass, and educating the public about forest health management.

The loss of the forest industry in the West leaves few options for woody biomass removal and utilization. Distance from markets and lack of technologies make biomass removal undesirable and uneconomical. Forest biomass is plentiful, carbon-neutral and essential to meet our nation's renewable energy and climate objectives. It is especially indispensable if many portions of the country are to meet the requirements for the use of renewable sources of energy. The proper utilization of renewable forest biomass to meet energy and climate change needs will provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits to the country and bring timely aid to struggling rural economies.

Sound management of our forests to provide biomass energy will improve the overall carbon footprint of domestic energy supplies. Additionally, proper forest management contributes to long-term forest health and vitality by improving wildlife habitat, protecting water quality, and reducing catastrophic wildfires that emit millions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases each year.



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NACD created a [Woody Biomass Desk Guide and Toolkit](#) for its members. The guide includes important points, strategies and information that is useful for landowners, the public and local leaders. It also includes a compilation of case studies sharing both the challenges and successes of existing biomass production and utilization projects throughout the United States.

NACD encourages the Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Agriculture and the committee to:

- Provide greater flexibility and cooperation with local and state governments in response to local issues in recovery of the landscape function, particularly better utilization of woody biomass following natural disasters.
- Construct permanent fuel breaks, reduce fuel loads, and increase maintenance efforts in WUI communities by coordinating with biomass utilization projects.
- Properly manage landscapes affected by expansion and overstocked woodlands by effectively utilizing biomass.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for NACD to submit public comments. NACD looks forward to working with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy and the Biomass Research and Development Technical Advisory Committee to continue addressing the utilization of biomass as a strategy to improve the health of our public and private forests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brent Van Dyke".

Brent Van Dyke  
President  
National Association of Conservation Districts