



Environmental Issues

Sawmills provide a market for timber, which is necessary to be sure landowners plant trees that clean our air and water instead of converting the land to other uses. Sawmills also produce a building product that is inherently green, as trees pull carbon from the atmosphere and store it in building products, while by-products from our mills are used to produce energy, paper and packaging, landscaping materials, and more. SLMA monitors and advocates on a variety of environmental issues. Priority issues include the on-going litigation and related rulemakings regarding the 2015 Waters of the US rule, which SLMA participates in as a member of the Waters Advocacy Coalition, biomass carbon neutrality, and endangered species reforms.

SLMA supports the biomass carbon neutrality rider pending in the FY19 Interior Appropriations Bill.

- Biomass energy produced from wood products manufacturers’ residuals is an economic and environmental win. Sawmills utilize residuals to produce heat for drying lumber, while the excess residuals are an additional source of revenue when used to create renewable energy within the natural carbon cycle of trees or make other wood based products, such as paper
- For many years, EPA policy treated biomass as carbon neutral, like the rest of the world. However, in 2010, EPA’s final Tailoring Rule, without public notice or a scientific basis, reversed that policy and for the first time regulated greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from biomass the same as fossil fuels
- Although EPA committed to reconsider and potentially revise its biomass policy by July 2014, it did not follow through on this commitment. Moreover, EPA’s Science Advisory Board failed to finalize a science report on biomass that has been in development for nearly seven years. In April 2018, EPA issued a policy statement recognizing the carbon neutrality of forest biomass as directed by law language in FY17 and FY18 Appropriations, but the agency has yet to finalize a policy
- This policy uncertainty has the potential to create further regulations on sawmills that utilize biomass energy and put our products at a competitive disadvantage to those of other countries that recognize the carbon neutrality of biomass
- Both the House and Senate Interior Appropriations bills have language directing EPA to finalize a policy that states biomass is carbon neutral, but the House bill includes language which clarifies congressional intent that the language is permanent and will help EPA defend against legal challenges to a new rule
- **Please ask the Appropriations Committees to support the House permanency provision in Conference**

SLMA supports Fish and Wildlife Service’s efforts to: restore the pre-2016 rule that limits consideration of unoccupied areas as critical habitat to situations where there is inadequate occupied habitat; and to rescind the “Blanket Rule.”

- The Blanket Rule provides the same protections to threatened species as endangered species, requiring FWS to decide if and how to implement a 4(d) rule regarding forest management activities under both designation scenarios
- Rescinding the blanket rule so that the original determination of FWS prescribes what specific efforts must be undertaken to help a threatened species would remove the uncertainty of what a 4(d) rule may or may not allow
- None of the changes eliminates any protection required by the ESA, yet would provide regulatory certainty for landowners

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