

## **Resolution in Opposition to Wood Pellets Manufacturing and Use of Wood-Bioenergy**

WHEREAS, wood pellets are manufactured from trees cut from the nation's invaluable forests, then tightly compressed into what resembles pellets or capsules then shipped to other countries- mostly in Europe and primarily the United Kingdom (UK), to be burned for energy usage;

WHEREAS, popularization of the use of wood pellets, sometimes referred to as bioenergy or wood biomass, is the result of the oftentimes well-intentioned, desperate need to get global warming below 1.5C in accordance with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement;

WHEREAS, the hazardous and toxic manufacturing of wood pellets has proven to be a clear cut case of environmental injustice by wood biomass industries, mostly locating their operations in close proximities of low income and/or communities of color;

WHEREAS, the manufacturing of wood pellets pose significant dangers to human health from toxic levels of exposures to Particulate Matter (PM2.5), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Nitrogen Oxide (NOx), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Carbon Dioxide (CO2), methanol, formaldehyde, and noise pollution;

WHEREAS, these industries- mostly foreign based, appear to have a pattern of targeting economic deprived states with lax environmental oversight, then skirting provisions of the Clean Air Act by grossly underestimating the amount of dangerous toxins they will be emitting, thereby avoiding more stringent EPA oversight and investing in installation of the required Best Available Control Technology;

WHEREAS, the critically acclaimed summary findings of a 2018 report of former EPA enforcement officials who founded the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP) revealed that:

- In 2017, at least a third of the wood pellet plants (7 out of 21) violated their permit limits by releasing illegal amounts of pollution, while another four plants had faulty permits issued by state governments that failed to require pollution control equipment required by the federal Clean Air Act. Overall, more than half of the plants (11 out of 21) either failed to keep emissions below legal limits or failed to install required pollution controls.*
- The 21 wood pellet mills exporting to Europe emit a total of 16,000 tons of health- threatening air pollutants per year, including more than 2,500 tons of particulate matter (soot), 3,200 tons of nitrogen oxides, 2,100 tons of carbon monoxide, and 7,000 tons of volatile organic compounds. These plants also emit 3.1 million tons of greenhouse gases annually.*
- A factory northeast of Houston owned by German Pellets has emitted nearly ten times its permitted limits of volatile organic compound pollution since it began operation in 2013, releasing 580 tons per year. Rather than require the facility to comply with legal limits, Texas officials are proposing to simply raise the limits to let the facility continue to emit dangerous levels of pollution.*
- At the Enviva Biomass wood pellet plant in Southampton County, Virginia, plant operators actually removed the pollution control equipment to evade upgrade requirements and switched from processing softwood to hardwood, which results in more carbon dioxide pollution and other harmful environmental impacts.*

*- Of the 15 largest operating facilities, at least eight have had fires or explosions since 2014, including at factories in North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, and Texas that released vast amounts of air pollution and/or injured employees. A blaze at the German Pellets storage silo in Port Arthur, Texas, burned for two months in 2017, releasing smoke that forced dozens of local residents to seek medical attention and killed a worker during cleanup.*

WHEREAS, in November of 2020, the Mississippi State Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issued a \$2.5 million fine against Drax Amite County- the largest fine to date against a wood pellets manufacturing plant; however to put this in perspective, it is the equivalent to one day's earning for 8 years of illegal pollution in Gloster, a small town of a little over 1100, with an 85% African-American population and 58% poverty rate- a typical demographic of wood pellets industry operations;

WHEREAS, Drax, a former giant in fossil fuel energy production, based in the UK, has converted to burning wood pellets and is now the world's largest wood pellets manufacturer, followed by UK based Enviva;

WHEREAS, Drax and Enviva are heavily subsidized in the UK and the United States (U.S.) and currently dominate wood pellets production in the U.S. while committing egregious human rights violations tantamount to crimes against humanity by wantonly and grossly falsely reporting their emissions;

WHEREAS, despite the recent interim report of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Committee and the repeated warnings from the world's most renown global scientists that biomass usage is even worse than coal by emitting almost double the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, the wood pellets industry continue to be aided in their propaganda campaign touting wood biomass as a clean, renewable energy source; with the EPA under former Administrator Pruitt having designated biomass as a renewable energy source along with wind and solar;

WHEREAS, even though the ultimate goal of the Paris Climate Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is to reduce global warming to well below 1.5C, one of the most contentious debates among countries who are Parties of the Agreement, is a flawed policy in Article 6 of the Paris Climate Rulebook that prohibits double counting of carbon emissions trading; and

WHEREAS, even though when trees are cut they release decades or centuries of stored carbon into the atmosphere, then more carbon is released throughout the wood pellets manufacturing process on this side of the Atlantic to the burning of the wood pellets for energy on the other side, the Article 6 loophole against double counting has resulted in zero counting of the carbon emissions from wood bioenergy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) appeals to state environmental regulatory agencies, Administrator Michael Regan of the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Congress, and President Joseph Biden to call for an immediate investigation into the decimation of our valuable forestry and an immediate moratorium on the hazardous, toxic manufacturing of wood pellets;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, given the tremendous environmental benefits of mature trees that the NAACP urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture to explore funding subsidy opportunities to appropriately compensate struggling foresters for keeping their trees;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the NAACP calls upon the EPA and Biden Administration to comply with the warnings of global scientists and the White House Environmental Justice Council regarding wood bioenergy; additionally consideration must be given to immediately rescinding the political, misleading and false classification by the Trump Administration designating wood biomass as a renewable energy source along with wind and solar;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the NAACP commends Parties of the Paris Climate Agreement for attempting to adhere to the 1.5C mandate, but pleads to countries in demand of wood pellets energy as a viable climate solution, to denounce and reject these products and associated human rights infractions of toxic pollution disproportionately inflicted on low income and/or Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color in the manufacturing and transporting processes; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the NAACP petitions the United States government to take the lead in the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by closing the loopholes in Article 6 that currently allow for zero accounting of wood biomass emissions under the Paris Rulebook- risking not meeting the crucial 1.5C mandate due to faulty accounting and instead show tangible, viable and aggressive ambition in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT, the NAACP calls upon the human rights experts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to invoke its special procedures to appoint a Special Rapporteur to fully investigate the human and civil rights atrocities associated with the manufacturing of wood pellets, particularly in the Southeastern U.S.