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April 19, 2016

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

On behalf of our members and activists and staff scientists, and the community members with whom we work, we are writing to voice our opposition to the Energy Policy and Modernization Act, S. 2012, because of its treatment of bioenergy. The amendment from Senators Collins and Klobuchar would undermine the ability of EPA to set policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This amendment sets a dangerous precedent for all climate science and could potentially lead to accelerated forest clearing for biomass fuel. An amendment from Senator Manchin promoting bioenergy as “net carbon negative” is similarly problematic. We therefore oppose any legislation that includes either the Collins-Klobuchar biomass definitions or the Manchin Carbon Capture and Sequestration proposal.

### **Biomass Definition**

The Senate accepted a Collins-Klobuchar amendment (S. Amnd. 3140) instructing the Secretaries of Energy and Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop policies that “reflect the carbon neutrality” of forest-derived biomass. However, treating forest bioenergy as having no carbon emissions directly contradicts physical reality. Per megawatt hour, biomass facilities emit more carbon dioxide than fossil fuel plants, due to their low efficiency and the inherent low energy density of wood as a fuel.<sup>1</sup> There is broad scientific

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pfpi.net/carbon-emissions>, <http://www.pfpi.net/air-pollution-2>

consensus that biomass is not categorically carbon neutral, given its immediate emissions and the long timeframes required to offset emissions with new forest or plant growth.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, bioenergy is not as competitively priced as wind, hydroelectric, or other, cleaner technologies.<sup>3</sup>

Legislating the carbon neutrality of an emissions-producing technology sets a dangerous precedent for all climate science, in that it attempts to override physical facts with policy declarations. The language also sets a dangerous precedent in seeming to give other agencies the authority to effectively veto EPA determinations on matters within its jurisdiction.

### **Carbon Capture and Sequestration**

We are also concerned by an amendment slated for a vote from Senator Manchin, S. Amnd. 3270. The amendment promotes co-firing biomass with coal as a way to create “*net-negative carbon emissions*,” when in actuality, co-firing of biomass will increase emissions of carbon dioxide.<sup>4</sup> The amendment also promotes biomass in combination with carbon capture and sequestration, an unfeasible and un-scalable approach that would yield no meaningful reductions in greenhouse gases while costing billions in taxpayer dollars.

Scientists, activists, and politicians around the world agree that we need to reduce our emissions as soon as possible to prevent catastrophic warming of our planet.<sup>5</sup> Legislating science, in contravention of physical reality, is a mistake that will do nothing to stop the actual accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We oppose S.2012 if it includes either the Collins-Klobuchar “carbon neutrality” amendment or the Manchin Carbon Capture and Sequestration proposal.

Sincerely,

350.ORG

ActionAid USA

Airheads (Minnesota)

Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise

Alliance for the Wild Rockies

Arise for Social Justice

Athens County Fracking Action Network.

Battle Creek Alliance

Beyond Toxics

Biofuelwatch

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<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.pfpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PFPI-bioenergy-and-the-CPP-Nov-45-2015.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=21492>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pfpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PFPI-bioenergy-and-the-CPP-Nov-45-2015.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/02/26/these-scientists-say-congress-is-legislating-scientific-facts-and-wrong-ones-too/>

Buckeye Forest Council, Inc.  
California Communities Against Toxics  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for International Environmental Law  
Center for Sustainable Economy  
Chlorine Free Products Association  
Clean Air Council  
Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline  
Community Research of College Park Maryland  
Conservatree  
Dogwood Alliance  
Don't Waste Arizona  
Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch  
EcoLaw Massachusetts  
Energy Justice Network  
Enviro-Show  
Environmental Health Studies Project  
Environmental Justice Center of Chestnut Hill United Church  
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center  
Family Farm Defenders  
Florida Environmental Justice Network  
Florida League of Conservation Voters  
Food & Water Watch  
Friends of Bell Smith Springs  
Friends of the Earth  
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives  
Global Justice Ecology Project  
Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community  
Green America  
Green Delaware  
Greenpeace USA  
Heartwood  
Indigenous Environmental Network  
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute  
Kentucky Environmental Foundation  
Kentucky Heartwood  
Klamath Forest Alliance  
KyotoUSA  
League of Wilderness Defenders  
Neighbors Against the Burners (Minnesota)

New York Climate Action Group  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
Olympic Forest Coalition  
Organic Consumers Association  
Partnership for Policy Integrity  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Rachel Carson Council  
Rainforest Action Network  
RESTORE: The North Woods  
San Juan Citizens Alliance  
Save Our Sky Blue Waters  
Sound Resource Management Group  
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now  
Springfield Climate Justice Coalition  
Stand  
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network  
Swan View Coalition  
Texas Campaign for the Environment  
The California Chaparral Institute  
Toxics Action Center Campaigns  
Western Nebraska Resources Council  
Wild Nature Institute  
Wild Virginia  
WildEarth Guardians  
Wilderness Watch  
WildWest Institute  
Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy  
Yellowstone to Uintas Connection