



THE REGISTERED FORESTER

Fall 2009

“BIO” BUZZWORDS

By Ruth Seawell

Bioenergy, biofuels, biomass...it seems there is new information on technologies, mill sitings and demand estimates daily. If you are having trouble understanding what all these “buzzwords or soundbites” mean to you and Alabama’s forest landowners, join the crowd! Hopefully the following clarifications will help you weed through this barrage of information.

Bioenergy vs Biofuels – When most people talk about bioenergy facilities they are referring to the production of power (electricity) or chemicals from biomass feedstocks. These usually involve a thermal process and include direct combustion (steam) or production of pellets (torrefaction, gasification, etc.). The key point is that there is a lot of flexibility in the type of materials used and the scale of operations. Depending on the facility anything from scrape-yard waste to logging residue to designated energy crops such as switchgrass can be used. The facilities can be small, such as localized power plants for a specific market like a prison or school, or large-scale, capital-intensive plants producing energy for large municipalities or power grids.

In contrast, most folks when discussing biofuels are talking about the production of ethanol through a chemical process that depends on very specific high carbohydrate feedstock like corn. While the production of ethanol from woody biomass has been around awhile, the perfection of it as an economic alternative to gasoline is still unproven. Most of the recently constructed biofuel facilities—particularly in regard to woody biomass—are funded by grants and other sources, and their economic feasibility is still undetermined. However, the greatest energy problem facing the US is the production of transportation fuels; therefore, producing ethanol from renewable

biomass at a market price point is of significant national interest and probably won’t be going away.

Biomass Feedstocks or Renewable Feedstocks – Biomass can include any organic material that is used as a renewable resource, e.g., wood, crops or waste. The key here is not the technological definition but rather its ultimate use that will determine if a biomass feedstock qualifies for renewable tax credits, incentives, grants, etc. One debate right now is whether or not slash or woody debris from national forests should be allowed. An even more significant issue for Alabama landowners is a proposed provision that would exclude new plantations established on existing natural stands as a qualifying biomass resource. This proposed restriction is driven by concerns that new biomass markets will create sweeping changes to the forest landscape.

Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) or Renewable Electricity Standards (RES) – RPS are regulations placed on providers of electricity to produce certain percentages of their energy from renewable resources such as wind, solar, wood, etc. Production efficiency

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gains count into this equation as well. Although Alabama and most of its neighbors have not enacted any such regulation over 25 states have. For example, North Carolina has a target of 3% in 2012 with a final mix of 12.5% renewable sources by 2021. Currently there is no federal policy but that has not been ruled out. This is fueling a great deal of debate because most southern states do not have as many options for renewable resources such as solar or wind. To further complicate the issue there are varying reports on how much biomass resource is available from urban waste, energy crops, and forest and agricultural residues to furnish this requirement. In addition, there are various opinions of how these renewables will be verified or monitored. The expectation is that there will be some requirement of certification associated with these resources through state voluntary "biomass management policies" or third-party certification such as SFI, FSC or Tree Farm. The bottom line is that

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New Registered Foresters

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DEFINITION OF A CONSULTING FORESTER

An article in our Winter 2009 Newsletter suggested that the Board of Registration should “consider requiring an affidavit to be listed as a consultant”. The point was made that anyone who buys timber, yet acts as a consultant to landowners in the sale of timber has a serious and unavoidable conflict of interest.

I would like to begin by stating that procurement foresters occupy a very valuable position in our profession. Their importance to our profession is undeniable. That having been said the issue I intend to discuss here is the lack of definition by the Alabama Board as to who can call themselves a consulting forester and whether it is a conflict of interest to buy timber and call yourself a consulting forester.

I would like to take a moment to review where we are as a profession in terms of this perceived conflict of interest.

- In a publication of the Society of American Foresters entitled Consulting Foresters 1984 (which was a directory of SAF members who provide services to the public in forest resources) members wishing to be listed as consultants had to meet the following criteria:

“A consultant remains free from conflicts of interest (for instance, wood procurement) to serve the best and sole interest of clients.”

- The Alabama Cooperative Extension Service at their website www.aces.edu/forestry/foresters states: “A consultant remains free from conflicts of interest (for instance, wood procurement) to serve the best and sole interest of clients or charges.”

It goes on to say that good consultants have the primary mission of representing the landowner/owners interests.

- Various states have written documents in place to “protect the public”. The Tennessee Division of Forestry requires that in order to be listed as a Cooperative Consulting Forester one must sign the following:

“I certify that I am a professional forester. My primary livelihood is derived from forestry and forestry-related consultant work. I have no vested interest in, and receive no salary from a primary wood using industry nor am I a timber buyer, trader or broker. Please include me on your list of consulting foresters operating in Tennessee during (year).”

- To be listed as a full time consulting forester on the Mississippi Boards website you must attest to the following statement:

“I certify that (1) at least fifty one (51) percent of my working time is spent performing professional forestry services on a fee basis, (2) I offer my services to the public rather than a single full-time employer, and (3) my primary business is consulting forestry.”

- To be listed as a Consulting Forester/Forestry Consultant with the State Board of Registration for Foresters in North Carolina one must sign an affidavit. One of the requirements reads as follows:

“I am not engaged and will not engage in any practice that constitutes a conflict of interest, including the procurement of standing timber, or in any way diminishes my ability to represent the best interests of my clients.”

It would appear that several of our sister southern states along with the Alabama Extension Service and the SAF are aligned with the concept of a consulting forester **not being involved in the buying of wood**. The Alabama Board is considering making changes to clarify this issue and is accepting comments from all registered foresters at this time.

Darrell Gates

REGISTERED FORESTER EXAM UPDATE

By Al Lyons

The Board has recognized the need to update the Registered Foresters exam process and question bank as it has been some time since its last revision. As technology has changed some of the questions are obsolete and others are not being asked. Updating the exam is no easy undertaking and the Board is fortunate that Dr. Glenn Glover has volunteered his time to do so. Most of you know Dr. Glover, but for those of you who do not, he is a retired Professor from the Auburn School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences. The Board is most appreciative for his willingness to volunteer and when you see him be sure and let him know you also appreciate his efforts.

In our July Board Meeting, we met with Dr. Glover and one of the ideas that surfaced was to provide an opportunity for all of our Registered Foresters to participate in the revision process. Dr. Glover and the Board would like to request that you submit an exam question(s) for possible inclusion in the new test bank. Please be thinking about it and submit your question to Alexis London by November 15, 2009. Alexis will assemble all the question submissions and forward to Dr. Glover. We look forward to your participation!

Board Undergoes Sunset Review

On June 18, 2009 the Board was reviewed by the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee. The last time our Board was reviewed by this Committee was 2005.

There are no outstanding audit items that need to be addressed. We credit our Board Administrator, Alexis London, for our very clean audit report.

The Board requested a language change to the law that we felt would strengthen our ability to enforce the use of the word forester by non-registered foresters. We asked for the change as an administrative item. The Committee did not rule in favor of the Board's request. Any change to our law in this regard will need a change in the law by the Alabama Legislature.

Listening to our Members

Recently the Sunset Committee sent out a survey to 100 registered foresters of Alabama and 69 people responded to a variety of questions. The ASBRF read and studied the responses of each and every one. If the ASBRF could solve all of those issues, then we need to run the country. However, we will try to tackle one of the common concerns - getting CFE's hours at a more economical rate. The board is going to apply for grants and funds from both the Alabama Forests Forever Foundation and private foundations. Not to put any pressure on any foundation, but we are applying for a grant from the Bradley/Murphy Trust and I personally think we are a match for their criteria. The Alabama Forests Forever Foundation gave out grants totaling \$140,000 in 2007. Many of our members are from the consulting world, which during these trying times are having a hard time paying for these classes. We have also received a grant from a foundation which will match dollar for dollar (up to a \$1,000) from our most generous members who care to donate. Also, we plan to have CFE classes more centrally located in Mobile, Montgomery and Birmingham that would be free to our members. All the details have not been worked out yet, but we are going to try to make this work. We will continue to listen to our members' needs. Thank you for the 69 people that voiced their opinions.

Gerald L. Schwarzauer

RENEWAL REMINDER

The deadline for license renewal is September 30, 2009. Final notices were mailed in August. Registered Foresters who have not renewed by September 30 will have until December 31, 2009 to renew by paying the \$100.00 renewal fee plus a \$100.00 late fee. Those who do not renew by September 30 are not licensed to practice forestry in the state until their renewal is complete. Those who do not renew their license prior to January 1, 2010 will have their licenses revoked and must apply for reinstatement. The reinstatement process is the same no matter what the reason for revocation of the license. It requires re-application, including submission of references, proof of educational requirements, payment of appropriate fees, and may require passage of an examination if the original license was issued prior to requirement of an examination or if, in the opinion of the Board, a re-examination is appropriate. In effect, a re-application is treated like a new application and the current requirements for registration are enforced. If a new license is issued, the original license number is retired and a new number assigned.

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because electricity is a publicly regulated entity and we have national policy for renewable energy, RPS/RESs will continue to be supported. No matter how one estimates or monitors the available biomass, conservatively or aggressively, there will more than likely be a market for roundwood biomass either through pre-commercial thinnings or dedicated energy crops. This brings me to my final buzz word; BCAP.

Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) – BCAP, part of the Farm Bill and Recovery Act, provides financial assistance to producers that deliver eligible biomass material to designated biomass conversion facilities for use as heat, power, bio-based products, etc. Initial assistance is for the collection, harvest, storage and transportation costs associated with the delivery of eligible materials through a direct matching of dollar for dollar of dry ton delivered to qualified facilities, up to a \$45 maximum over the next two years. This is all to be administered by the local Farm Service Agency (FSA).

FSA is currently taking applications for qualifying designated facilities. To date there are only five listed as approved: four energy companies in the NE and

California and one sawmill in California. It is feasible that any facility using biomass for energy production in Alabama would qualify, even if it is for internal use like in a pulpmill or sawmill. Depending on who participates in this cost-share program there will be many unanswered questions to be addressed as the market develops. How is the matching subsidy allocated among logger, dealer and landowner? Will the qualifying facility adjust their delivered price for the match? Will there be delay in the cost-share money and how long? Who will handle the bulk of the administrative duties? Will new timber sale contracts need to be developed to address the biomass credit as a retained economic interest by the landowner? Will the credit be applied to the roundwood, the resulting byproducts, or both? If that wasn't enough bureaucracy to weed through, Phase 2 of the BCAP is due to come out next year with cost shares of up to 75% of the establishment of an eligible biomass crop and/or annual payments similar to CRP.

So the bottom line (final buzz word) is to stay tuned to the development of the biomass markets in Alabama. Don't expect all the facilities you read about to actually pour concrete, nor will there be a sweeping change to the forest landscape or a run on the timber resource. Something in between the buzz will more than likely be the truth.

UPDATE YOUR ROSTER INFORMATION

Please take a moment to review your current roster information online at <http://asbrf.alabama.gov/rosterofforesters.asp>. To submit changes, fax the form below to 334-353-3641 or submit the online Change of Address form at <http://asbrf.alabama.gov/vs2k5/changeofaddress.aspx>.

Change of Address Form

Full Name _____ License Number: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Business Address: _____

Business City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County _____

Business Phone: _____ Business Fax: _____

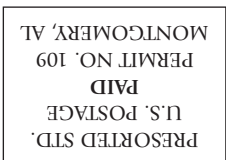
Business E-mail: _____

Home Address: _____

Home City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County _____

Home Phone: _____ Home Fax: _____

Home E-mail: _____



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