



New 2011 BUSS Talking Points - Draft

1. Transportation issue: There should be exemptions made for biomass to be trucked at higher loads on federal highways than today, at load that match what are allowed on state highways (currently the limit is 80k lbs for federal vs. 96k lbs for state¹). This is a big deal because the extra 16k lbs represents “pure payload.” Trucks today have stronger axels, brakes, and other mechanical equipment than they had at the time that the federal highways were built. In addition, federal highways were built to higher standards than state highways and so should withstand the same loads. This may not be a huge barrier to biomass utilization but there is no one silver bullet solution. Change may require a lot of small, incremental adjustments such as this one. (Note: the railroad industry is reported to be against this proposed change.)
2. Context setting: Growing awareness of the increased risk of wildfires has led to accelerated forest management and fire risk mitigation efforts. However, in the push for acres treated, biomass utilization has lagged behind. There are life cycle costs to forest treatments beyond cutting—the job is not done just then. Forest restoration requires biomass extraction and fire risk is also mitigated by extraction (due to soil sterilization following uncharacteristic fires). We should invest limited funds not in what seems to be the cheapest short-term solution but to what is going to further us to our goal. Landowners or managers should ask contractors to include in their bids the cost of getting the wood to the road; investing in this area would increase the available supply of woody biomass. (Note: this is not relevant for very steep areas.)
3. Context setting: Biomass utilization in the Front Range is about traditional wood products as well as bioenergy. There are several stable, traditional wood product industries that should be maintained (e.g., landscaping products, animal bedding, post and poles, furniture), and new composite building materials may still be invented, driving up demand for biomass. However, in the future, bioenergy will likely be a significant portion of what becomes of the biomass cut in the Front Range—but not in the near future. Right now, heating from biomass is still the most efficient use of biomass for energy. Combined Heat & Power (CHP) is the second most likely future use of biomass and co-firing biomass with coal offsets air quality pollutants, which increases the perceived value of the biomass since it not only produces energy but cleans the emissions of the coal. For biopower, distributed small-scale solutions in the 3 – 5 MW solutions are the most appropriate and sustainable.
4. Team slogan: “Biomass, it just makes sense, people like it, and it doesn’t cost as much as the alternative.”

1. 96k for a truck with more axels, 88k with just the single axel