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## Bioenergy Day Recognizes Sector's Contributions to Forest Health, Rural Jobs Across America

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Today, we join stakeholders around the country in observance of [National Bioenergy Day](#), recognizing the importance of using domestic biomass for a wide variety of applications, including renewable energy, heating and cooling, and biobased products, to improve forest health, mitigate climate change, create jobs and strengthen communities in rural America.

Solutions from the Land (SfL) and its renewable energy platform, 25x'25, [join a wide range of other groups](#) that are demonstrating today that sustainable use of biomass is among important, holistic solutions that mitigate the effects already being seen in U.S. forests due to climate change. Using excess biomass resources that are produced from existing forest management activities – as well as wastes from the forest products sector – supports forest health while reducing wildfire risk. And it should not be forgotten that all of these activities create economic opportunity for beleaguered rural America, generating local jobs and boosting economic activity.

While deforestation is a pressing global concern, the U.S. Forest Service says the forested landmass of the United States has stayed stable for the past 100 years, despite a tripling of population growth. Still, U.S. forests face pressing threats from climate change, pests and urbanization. Very simply, sustainable biomass utilization can help support forest health while creating economic incentives to keep land forested.

Woody biomass has been referred to by some interests as a "Goldilocks" renewable – use too much, and we risk undue harm to ecosystems and forests; use too little and the risk of having overstocked forests that are unhealthy and at greater danger from wildfire. Forestry scientists say that due to years of wildfire suppression, U.S. forests today have entered a "use too little" scenario, in which many forests are overstocked and unhealthy because of the proliferation of invasive species and pests.

From producing long-lived building materials such as cross-laminated timber that sequester carbon, to generating renewable heating, cooling, and energy in local communities, smart biomass utilization can support the interrelated goals of forest health, forest carbon sequestration, water and air quality, creating and maintaining jobs, as well as keeping forests healthy for Americans' enjoyment and recreation.

The U.S. Forest Service reported last December that much of our western forests are facing a crisis of epic proportions, noting that in California alone, 129 million trees have died since 2010

due to a combination of drought, pest infestations and the amplifying effects of climate change. While some of these trees must be left in the forest to return important nutrients to the soil and provide habitat for wildlife, leaving millions of dry tons of wood in California's forests is increasing wildfire risk to unacceptable levels.

Unfortunately, the excess biomass is mostly being dealt with in the worst possible manner – open burning – which is costing taxpayers millions of dollars and emitting carbon dioxide as well as other harmful air pollutants, including particulate matter and smog precursors. The situation is not unique to California. Using this dead wood and other types of woody biomass resources for baseload power and for heating and cooling needs in schools, hospitals, businesses and residences can support forest restoration projects and reduce the amount of hazardous fuels, among other benefits.

Rural communities are especially dependent on fossil fuel-based heat and wild fluctuations in home heating oil and propane prices can cause economic pain in the communities least able to pay high heating bills. Conversely, using woody biomass in cold climates can deliver significant savings on heating bills while also creating local jobs.

Other "waste" biomass materials, such as orchard waste, urban wood waste or animal manures, are too often improperly disposed of – causing avoidable environmental damage in the form of degraded air and water quality, as well as climate impacts. Using these wastes for a variety of products can turn a problem into a solution.

Policymakers and officials cannot turn their backs on biomass as a solution. A recently released report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees Celsius](#), [recognizes](#) that biomass utilization combined with carbon sequestration will be necessary if we are to keep global warming significantly below the 2-degrees-Celsius limit called for under the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement signed by 185 nations.

SfL urges all partners and stakeholders to reach out to policy makers and call for the removal of barriers that impede the use of domestic biomass as a source of renewable baseload power, heating, cooling and biobased products. Help them understand that smart biomass utilization will not only help protect and enhance forest health, it will create economic opportunities in rural areas of the country that can most benefit from wise use of their available natural resources.