

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH: INVESTIGATING THE DESTRUCTION OF PRECIOUS FORESTS

Written by [Rita Frost](#), October 26th, 2019

Dogwood Alliance has worked in the Southern United States for over 20 years to protect communities and forests from the impacts of large-scale industrial logging. Our priority has been and will always be, to communicate the most recent scientific evidence as well as to amplify concerns of impacted Southerners to decision-makers. For the past seven years, in partnership with NGOs, scientists, and policymakers from across the globe, one of our primary areas of focus has been addressing the impacts of a growing global demand for wood pellets. Over the course of that period, our region has become the [world's largest exporter](#) of biomass.

Investigations by countless media outlets and independent watchdogs over the past several years reveal the truth about the supply chains for pellets manufactured and exported by Enviva, the world's largest wood pellet manufacturer, to utilities in Europe including RWE in the Netherlands, Drax in the UK, and Orsted in Denmark. Independent media, government reports in the EU and the US, as well as the industry's own reporting have confirmed [our own investigations](#). They depict a disturbing pattern where wood pellets are harvested from native hardwood forests (1) in an area designated as a [global biodiversity hotspot](#)— all happening under the umbrella of “sustainable” sourcing standards. In fact, the state of North Carolina recently [advocated in their own official Clean Energy Plan](#), that the large-scale use of North Carolina's forests in foreign markets should be “*challenged at the national and international level*,” and the official document explicitly recognized that the wood pellet industry increases carbon emissions in the state via logging, processing, and transportation.

The reality is that industrial scale use of biomass for energy is bad for our climate, forests, and local communities. Sustainability policies for the harvesting of wood pellets cannot guarantee a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions within timeframes relevant to fighting climate change. Reports from world renowned scientists have shown that burning biomass from forests for electricity [creates more carbon dioxide emissions than burning coal](#), and that increased carbon dioxide concentrations [persist in the atmosphere for decades or more](#).

Countries looking to meet their commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement and phase out coal must stop wasting scarce public resources subsidizing dirty and destructive biomass energy. Instead, we urge

policymakers to redirect investments to genuinely zero-carbon energy sources.

Independently verified investigations into wood pellet biomass sourcing:

- [Zembla: Forests as fuel](#) (March 22, 2017)
 - [TV2 reveals climate control errors](#) (September 10, 2019)
 - [Channel 4 News, Dispatches, Forests in the U.S. cut down and burnt](#) (2018)
 - [Washington Post: How Europe's climate policies led to more U.S. trees being cut down](#) (2015)
1. Enviva's own website reports that hardwood makes up 58% of their source material. Enviva Biomass, "Track & Trace Program," <http://www.envivabiomass.com/sustainability/track-and-trace/> (accessed October, 2019); Enviva's own sustainability program reports it often takes 25-100% of the harvest volume in final cuts of mature forests around their Chesapeake mills—far beyond normal quantities of "residues" or scrapwood. Enviva Biomass, "Enviva Wood Supply Map," <http://www.envivabiomass.com/sustainability/track-and-trace/enviva-wood-supply-map/#10/36.4379/-77.2298> (accessed October, 2019)

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