



Peter Goldmark
Washington State
Commissioner of Public Lands

March 4, 2011

The Honorable Lynda Ring Erickson
The Honorable Tim Sheldon
The Honorable Jerry Lingle
Mason County Commissioners
411 North 5th Street
Shelton, WA 98584

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for your efforts to bring green jobs to your county and contribute to Washington's renewable energy efforts. As you know, I see promise for the use of biomass from timber harvest residuals to produce renewable energy. By working together we can turn this opportunity into reality. As we critically evaluate projects that propose to utilize biomass, I believe we must ensure that each project will use a sustainable level of biomass, thereby avoiding negative environmental impacts in our forests due to excessive demand. With this balanced perspective in mind, I am writing to express my concerns to you about the Adage project proposed in Mason County.

The Adage project will require approximately 350,000 bone dry tons of biomass each year. To meet this demand, the facility would need to source significant volumes of timber harvest residuals from both public and private landowners. There is reason to question whether this volume can be environmentally and economically sustained within feasible hauling distance from the proposed Adage facility.

Timber harvest residuals are renewable but not limitless. I believe it is in the public interest that projects utilizing this resource as a feedstock put it to the most efficient uses possible. The Adage project, producing only electrical power, is designed to achieve approximately 27% efficiency. With a pressing need to identify alternatives to fossil fuel, inefficiency in utilizing a feedstock that could be more efficiently put to use in the production of renewable biofuels or combined heat and power is, in my view, problematic.

Forest biomass can and should play a role in Washington's renewable energy future, complementary to other renewable energy sources, and can stimulate much needed economic activity in local communities like those in Mason County. To that end, we must ensure that all projects proposing to utilize this valuable material do so in a manner that assures the ecological health of our forests and avoids negative impacts to forest product businesses. My forest biomass initiative at the Department of Natural Resources emphasizes appropriate scale and location, as well as high energy efficiency, to point toward the renewable energy future we envision.

I hope we can work in partnership to create an environmentally and economically sustainable bioenergy sector in Washington. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to talk about the Adage project and other issues related to utilizing timber harvest residuals for energy and fuel production.

Sincerely,

Peter Goldmark
Commissioner of Public Lands

cc: The Honorable Michael K. Dorcy, Mason County Prosecuting Attorney