



# BIG SKY NIPF-ty NOTES

*Supporting non-industrial private forest owners (family forests)  
in their rightful and responsible use, management and  
enjoyment of their forest lands.*

---

Paid for by the Montana Forest Owners Association  
P.O. Box 17126, Missoula, MT 59808

Web: [www.forestsmontana.com](http://www.forestsmontana.com)  
E-mail: [info@forestsmontana.com](mailto:info@forestsmontana.com)

Volume 20, No. 1  
SPRING, 2014

---

## **MFOA Elected Officers for 2014:**

President—Debra Parker Foley; V. President—Pat Mandzak  
Treasurer—Joe Moran; Secretary—Mark Boardman

## **STATE NEWS:**

The Montana Legislature is not in session this year. However, Interim Committees are at work in 2014. Of interest to Montana's private forest owners:

**Senate Joint Resolution 15:** The Montana Legislature has adopted a Joint Resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives, “**requesting an interim study evaluating the management of certain federal lands, assessing risks, and identifying solutions.**”

The Legislature stated that since over 25% of Montana's land is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, this management has a “significant and direct bearing on Montana's environment, education funding, economy, culture, wildlife, and the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens.” The Legislature also stated that federal funding for responsible management of Forest Service lands and BLM lands are in “serious jeopardy while critical threats such as beetle kills, invasive species, watershed degradation, access restrictions, and catastrophic wildfires continue to escalate.”

<http://leg.mt.gov/bills/2013/billhtml/SJ0015.htm>

The Legislature conducted a survey of County Commissioners whose counties contain 15% or more land area under the management of the Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management. Thirty-five counties were surveyed. The survey and summary of responses can be found online at: <http://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2013-2014/EQC/Committee-Topics/sj-15/county-survey-response-totals.pdf>

All aspects of the study, including presentation and review requirements, will be concluded by September 15, 2014. The Montana Environmental Quality Council's schedule for this Interim Committee can be viewed at: <http://leg.mt.gov/css/Committees/Interim/2013-2014/EQC>.

## **Lewis and Clark County Firefighters No longer Obligated to Save Homes From Wildfires.**

Lewis and Clark County recently adopted a first-of-a-kind resolution. The location of homes in Lewis and Clark County will no longer dictate fire suppression tactics or the placement of fire lines--they have no obligation to protect a home from a wildfire in the urban interface. Lewis and Clark County commissioners also directed local fire crews to receive training in basic wildfire behavior. For more info: [http://missoulian.com/news/local/lewis-and-clark-county-firefighters-no-longer-obligated-to-save/article\\_1c5f648a-7117-11e3-849d-0019bb2963f4.html](http://missoulian.com/news/local/lewis-and-clark-county-firefighters-no-longer-obligated-to-save/article_1c5f648a-7117-11e3-849d-0019bb2963f4.html)

## **UM and MSU BIOMASS STUDY— IMPORTANCE TO LANDOWNERS**

Funded by a \$10 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, five universities, including UM and MSU, joined by research labs across the Northern Rockies, are researching ways to turn dead timber into a carbon-neutral and economically viable liquid fuel source for trucks and autos.

The group, Bioenergy Alliance Network of the Rockies, also includes the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the National Renewable Energy Lab, along with Cool Planet Energy Systems – a Colorado firm whose investors include General Electric, British Petroleum and Google Ventures.

Cool Planet has patented technology that converts non-food biomass into a high octane gasoline additive or even possibly biodiesel. The company is looking to establish five trial refineries near potential biomass sources, which include the forests of the Northern Rockies.

The proposal for Montana would mainly look to use existing debris generated from fire hazard reduction work, thinning and logging applications that currently are piled and burned. Converting it into an energy source would not only increase the utilization efficiency of work in the forest, it would generate income from what now is a cost.

This project is important to the 7.5 million acres of private lands where owners are actively trying to maintain a healthy forest. Much of the standing deadwood in Montana is federally owned U.S. Forest Lands where little can be done because of policy issues. Cool Planet could build production plants in Montana. Montana has several advantages over its neighbors that include an existing logging infrastructure and the state's abundance of dead-standing wood. Potential sites might include the shuttered Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. site in Frenchtown, and the community of Seeley Lake, which has a functional logging mill and sits close to the Blackfoot Challenge, or the old Pablo Plum Creek mill site that could take advantage of the active management on tribal lands.

From the *Missoulian*, 12-24-13.

## **NATIONAL NEWS:**

### **Farm Bill Passes**

On February 7, President Obama signed the “Agricultural Act of 2014” known as the “FARM BILL.” The Farm Bill is the product of the House-Senate Farm Bill Conference. It is a five-year farm bill that reforms agricultural policy and contains a number of important forestry provisions:

- Permanent extension of authority to enter into stewardship contracts;
- Fire liability provisions in stewardship contracts to be the same as timber sale contracts;
- Reaffirms that projects conducted under CE's should not be subject to Administrative Appeals;
- Designation by prescription (D X P) and designation by description (D X D) authorized for Forest Service timber contracts;
- A limited 3,000 categorical exclusion (CE) for use in treating insect and disease infestations.
- EPA barred from requiring Clean Water Act permits for forest roads;
- Good Neighbor Authority to allow states to perform work on federal forest lands;
- Expands Healthy Forest Restoration Act authorities to streamline projects in areas that have been identified as facing forest health issues;
- Gives Governors greater authority in the identification of critical areas and use of insect and disease CE.

The full text of the Bill can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr2642enr/pdf/BILLS-113hr2642enr.pdf>

---

*MFOA is a non-profit organization directed by a voluntary board of family forest owners. MFOA provides policy issues development, giving a “voice” to Montana family forest owners in the policy-making arena. Visit our website at: [www.forestmontana.com](http://www.forestmontana.com)*