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## Renewable Energy Development: The BG&E Woody Biomass Project

By Michael Dobson

Re: Letter to the Editor from Dr. RonSaff about BG&E Biomass Plant

With the price of gas at \$4 dollars a gallon, utility bills higher than ever and our addiction to foreign oil... this is a critical time for our nation's energy policy. How we approach the energy issue now fundamentally shapes the future. It is imperative that the energy policy debate be factual and free of conjecture. Dr. Saff's letter regarding biomass renewable energy generation by the BG&E Biomass Plant is regrettably misinformed.

Biomass electric generation and the BG&E project is not a municipal solid waste incinerator. It is a woody biomass plant. It is green energy. This plant is a gasification system unlike any other ([www.biggreenenergy.com](http://www.biggreenenergy.com)). BG&E requested an exemption from municipal solid waste regulations because it is not an incinerator. The plant meets Department of Environmental Protection fuel specifications for use of 100% woody biomass. The exemption does not allow BG&E to emit pollutants - it merely permits alternative reporting and equipment monitoring. Clearly, Dr. Saff misunderstands the current regulatory environment for renewable energy projects.

The editorial also failed to mention the rigorous process, clean gas burning equipment and other pollution control mechanisms in the BG&E permitting plan. BG&E's unique biomass plant design and operation for woody biomass production minimizes the potential for any dioxins emitted in processing. Arguably, municipal solid waste produces more dioxins due to the amount of paper and plastics in burning garbage. In fact, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, today's number one source of dioxins is unregulated residential outdoor burning, fireplaces and wood burning stoves! (<http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recordisplay.cfm?deid=159286>).

Granted, BG&E expects to burn untreated gas – for six hours per year. And, potentially, that burning can produce dioxins. However, BG&E proposes that the temperatures used, along with the scientific processing method, dust control devices and advanced cleaning or scrubber system, will mitigate or even destroy dioxins. Again, this is a woody biomass plant – not the industrial wood burning combustion system used by the pulp and paper mills.

Finally, BG&E and other officials have been accused of pursuing the biomass plant in 'private'. On the contrary, the biomass project has gone through an open and rigorous political process to secure a power purchase agreement with the City of Tallahassee. Several public meetings have been held. Given our critical energy needs, the development of alternative energy should not be thwarted by misinformed accusations, distortion of fact or the failure to openly discuss and address technical details of a potential project. To that end, the *Tallahassee Scientific Society* is poised to be the forum for a full evaluation of the proposed project and technology.



The Florida Renewable Energy Producers Association (FREPA) welcomes a high level of expertise and scrutiny of projects like the BG&E woody biomass plant. We want renewable energy development to proceed with goodwill and facts regarding applicable science and technology . Florida is now positioned to become the leader in renewable energy production for the entire Southeast. The Governor, Legislature and Florida Public Service Commission (PSC), along with utilities and energy producers, are working toward that end. It is all the more imperative then to understand what renewable energy production is and what it is not as alternative energy becomes a larger part of our nation's energy supply.

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