Industrial Logging and Environmental Justice in the U.S. South

Dr. Treva Gear, Concerned Citizens of Cook County
Adam Colette, Dogwood Alliance
Environmental Justice (EJ): What is it?

- The **fair treatment** and **meaningful involvement** of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the **development**, **implementation**, and **enforcement** of **environmental laws**, **regulations**, and **policies** (EPA, 2022).
Fair Treatment

Means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from operations or policies

- industrial
- governmental
- commercial
Meaningful Involvement

Oportunity to participate in decisions

Community concerns are considered in decisions

Decision makers seek out involvement of impacted people
Environmental Injustice: The Issue with Adel

- High levels of polluting industries in communities of color
- Lack of enforcement of environmental protection laws or ordinances
- Lack of communication by government and industrial agencies
- Community members uninformed and misinformed about polluting industries
Industrial Logging is an Environmental Injustice
Poverty in the US South

African American Population in the US South

Percent African American Population
- 0-9.4%
- 9.4-22.2%
- 22.2-36.6%
- 36.6-54.1%
- 54.1-100%

For more information, contact:
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist
sam@dogwoodalliance.org | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

Biomass & EJ Communities

For more information, contact
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist
sam@dogwoodalliance.org | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

Biomass facilities are a growing problem in the US South, and are twice as likely to be sited in Environmental Justice communities.

Data source: Koester & Davis (2018) Environmental Justice 11(2). Siting of Wood Pellet Production Facilities in Environmental Justice Communities...
Forest Landscape Integrity In The US South

For more information, contact
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist
sam@dogwoodalliance.org | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

Forest landscape integrity index - FLII scores range from 0 (lowest integrity) to 10 (highest). Reds and oranges indicate poor forest integrity.

Data from: forestintegrity.org
Grantham et al. (2020) Nature Communications 11(5978).
Cause of Tree Cover Loss In The US South

For more information, contact
Sam Davis, Ph.D. Conservation Scientist
sam@dogwoodalliance.org | (828) 251-2525 ext. 19

Cause of tree cover loss. This indicates forest disturbance, not necessarily long-term or permanent forest loss.

Biomass facilities have been growing exponentially since 2011. These facilities export hundreds of thousands of tons of material each year to European and Asian countries. Biomass releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than burning coal.

Data source: SELC (southernenvironment.org) and others.
Predicted Climate Change Impacts to GDP

Adel, Georgia

Case-Study: A Community Fighting the Biomass Industry
Demographics of Adel, GA

Population: 5,571
African-Americans: 46.5%
White: 43.9%
Hispanic/Latino: 3.5%
Two or more races: 3.8%
Asian: 2.3%

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)
Demographics of Adel, GA

Poverty: 23.1%

No Health Insurance: 27.5%
Impact of annexation of property into Adel for industrial purposes
The Power of Grassroots Organizing

Concerned Citizens of Cook County

- Convened on June 12, 2020 to discuss concerns
- Priority focus was environmental threats
- Learned that a wood pellet plant was coming
  - Renewable Biomass Group (RBG)
- The biomass battle begins
Health Impact on Adel Community

- Decrease air quality → increase in respiratory illness
- Fine particulate matter (100 tons/yr)
  - Asthma
  - Cardiovascular disease
- Nitrogen oxides (250 tons/yr)
  - Smog and acid rain
- Wood dust and soot
Other Negative Impacts

● Noise 24 hours/day and 7 days/week
  ○ Up to 80 decibels

● Truck traffic
  ○ More air pollution

● Longer train which would hinder crossing

● Fires and explosions
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” –Margaret Mead
Adel Council votes 3-2 to approve rezoning for wood pellet plant

By Charles Shiver

The Adel City Council voted 3-2 Monday, Sept. 21, 2020, to approve rezoning land for a new wood pellet facility to be built in Adel.

A public hearing was held at the Tuesday, Sept. 8, meeting on the rezoning and annexation request by the Adel Industrial Development Authority (AIDA) for the new industry.

During Monday’s meeting, the Adel City Council members did not discuss the request prior to voting. Protestors with signs against the wood pellet plant rallied in front of City Hall prior to the meeting and then carried the signs into the Council’s meeting room.

171.03 acres - located on Highway 41 South and located south of Faussett Road, west of Southern Railway; east of I-75 and the land of Otis Faussett AIDA also asked to have the land rezoned from Agricultural (AU) to Heavy Industrial (HI) for the new industry.

During Monday’s meeting,
The Power of Collaboration

- Dogwood Alliance
- Anthropocene Alliance
- Georgia Conservation Voters (GCV)
- Environmental Integrity Project (EIP)
- Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL)
- Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC)
- WWALS Watershed Coalition - Suwanee Riverkeepers
Our Actions to Protect Our Community

- Ads in local newspaper
- Commented on draft air permit to GA EPD
- Phone and email campaign to city council to vote “no”
- Members spoke at public hearing on Sept. 8, 2020
- Met with agencies and legislative staff
- Educated community on issues
- Requested open records
- Documentary
THE TRUTH...

- Woody biomass is neither clean nor renewable.
- They clearcut forests, which take at least 20-30 years to replace.
- Communities with pellet plants have serious health issues, including increased rates of asthma and respiratory problems.
- Biomass plants, like most polluting industries, are located in rural communities of color.

FORESTS = HEALTH

KISS IT GOODBYE
Their name isn’t the only misleading thing...

THINGS THE RENEWABLE BIOMASS GROUP HAS TOLD THE COMMUNITY:

- Woody biomass is a clean renewable energy source.
- We only use waste wood and scraps.
- Our pellet plant will bring jobs and economic prosperity to the community.
- We’ll only be operating 8 hours/day.
- There are no health problems associated with biomass plants.
- We’re here to support the community.

YOU CAN STOP THIS BIG CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tell your Council Members to Vote NO on rezoning!

A NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEADER IN FORESTRY

Thanks to healthy markets for forestry – including paper, lumber and over 5,000 the sustaining processes – we can commit to the sustainable forestry policy that supports forest landowners. Georgia is recognized as a global and national leader in forestry.

HERE ARE A FEW REASONS WHY GEORGIA IS THE #1 FORESTRY STATE:

#1 in Commercially Available Timberland
Georgia has 22 million acres of commercially available, private timberland, more than any other state (1).

#1 in Annual Timber Harvest Volume
Georgia tops every other state in the nation in terms of pure volume of timber harvested (7) and overall tree volume in Georgia has been net increasing since 1995 (9).

#1 Exporter of Pulp, Paper, and Paperboard Mill Products
Georgia accounts for 21 percent of all U.S. exports of pulp and paper (6).

#1 Exporter of Wood Pellets
Exports of wood pellets are valued at $126 million, 26 percent of the U.S. total (5).

WORKING FOREST ALSO PROVIDES A MYRIAD OF ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS.

$36.2 Billion
Overall annual economic impact in 2017 from the forest industry (2).

146,141 Jobs
Total direct and indirect employment in Georgia from the forest industry (3).

$37 Billion
Annual value of ecosystem services of private forests (4).

48% Annual Growth vs. Removals
In addition to a consistent increase in forest land cover over the last 50 years due to healthy forests (5).

SOURCES

(1) Georgia Forestry Commission, 2019, Georgia Forest Facts
(2) Georgia Forestry Commission, 2019, Economic Benefits of the Forest Industry in Georgia, 2019
(3) Georgia Forestry Commission, 2015, statewide Assessment of Forest Resources 2015
(4) Morin, Rebecca et al., (2011), Quantifying the value of non-timber ecosystem services from Georgia’s private forests. University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, January 2011
(5) Georgia Forestry Commission, 2019, Sustainability Report for Georgia’s Forests, January 2019
(6) U.S. Census Bureau, 2018, County Economic Census, 2017, August 2018
(8) Georgia Forestry Commission, statewide Assessment of Forest Resources (2015), SBS: accessed June 2017
(9) Article Source: https://www.georgiaforestry.com/forestryfacts
PROTECT OUR CHILDREN
SAVE OUR FORESTS
STOP THE WOOD PELLET PLANT

JOINCOOKCITIZENS.ORG
ABANDONED

GREED, NEGLECT AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN ADEL
Accomplishments in the Fight

- Inspector General of EPA issued report of state non-compliance with public comment on final permits
- April 1, 2022 Georgia EPD began holding 30 day public comment period on “synthetic minor” air pollution permits
  - First time in over 20 years
The Fight Continues…

● Renewable Biomass Group has not broken ground yet
● Spectrum’s air permit is not yet approved
  ○ Public comments due by May 2, 2022
● Educating the community continues
For more information contact

Adam Colette
Program Director - Dogwood Alliance
adam@dogwoodalliance.org
www.dogwoodalliance.org

Dr. Treva Gear
Chair and Founder - Concerned Citizens of Cook County
tygear2005@gmail.com
www.joincookcitizens.org