

Put biomass in the mix

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IF DONE sustainably, generating electricity from biomass can dramatically reduce global warming emissions by displacing coal or other fossil fuels ("Biomass anxiety," Editorial, May 8). Emissions associated with burning fossil fuels for planting, harvesting, transporting, and processing biomass - in addition to emissions from a biomass plant's smokestacks - must be weighed against the carbon dioxide that is taken out of the atmosphere when biomass fuel is regrown. When done right, it's a balanced cycle with few net carbon dioxide emissions.

Of course, our forests and other potential sources for biomass fuel must be managed sustainably, both to protect key natural resources and to ensure that we can rely on clean renewable biomass into the future.

Coal-fired electricity accounts for more than half of our nation's global warming pollution. To avoid the worst consequences of climate change, which would have serious implications for our forests and other native ecosystems, we'll need to transition away from coal and toward a range of clean alternatives such as sustainable biomass, other renewables, energy efficiency, and conservation. Instead of pitting one solution against another, let's work to sustainably deploy them all to address the planet's looming climate change threat.

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