

IF YOU TELL RUSSELL BIOMASS TO TAKE A HIKE

YOU'RE GIVING OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS THE BOOT



Cinda Jones

In a way, it really is that simple. Turning away industries like Russell Biomass will, in the end, lead to more and more development — residential, commercial and, yes, industrial — in towns like Russell, which means less and less open space for hiking, hunting and fishing. And what open land is left will be unmanaged land, strewn with dead and dying timber, unfriendly to recreation and merely waiting for development. How is that? Well, instead of asking us, ask Cinda Jones.

Cinda doesn't have a stake in Russell Biomass. In fact, as the ninth generation owner of her family business, Amherst-based Cowls Lumber, she's always been in competition with one of the Russell Biomass partners, Bill Hull, who owns Hull Forest Products. Cinda does, however, have a stake in the future of the forest management industry. Like everyone in her business, Cinda is facing a growing crisis. Pulp mills have been closing down in recent years, diminishing an important traditional market for the low-grade trees foresters remove from the woods. That's made the removal of low-grade wood an unrecoverable expense, which may be fine for loggers who believe in leaving the junk in the woods where it looks awful and hampers new growth, but it doesn't work for people like Cinda who believe in and practice sustainable forestry. Russell Biomass, with a green energy initiative, offers one of the few viable markets for that low-grade wood currently on the horizon. But we'll only need to buy that wood if we can get our plant up and running.

So what does that mean for recreation? Well, if companies like Cowls and Hull can't at least break even practicing sustainable forestry, they'll either have to change how they do business or go under and sell the land, where possible,

for home sites and development. Either way, the result is less open space. Cinda can't accept this option. Neither can Bill Hull, who has done more than any other private entity in the Hill Towns to help ensure the continuation of the rural character of the hills through his protection of more than 8,500 acres of forestland from development, including 10 miles of frontage on the Westfield River and its main tributaries. If they can't remove junk wood from the thousands of acres of forest land they own, and the land becomes dangerous to use for recreation, they'll be forced to shut down or restrict access for public safety reasons, denying public entry to miles of hiking trails and hunting land as well as river and lake frontage. And if worse comes to worst, they'll end up having to sell off parcels to developers, which means a reduction of open space. As Cinda puts it, "I don't want to post my land, and I don't want to sell it off, but I also don't want to put myself out of business."

The way Cinda sees it, not only would Russell Biomass help reduce America's dependency on foreign oil and other fossil fuels, but it would help landowners stay in the sustainable forestry business, which will in turn preserve forest land and allow owners to keep that land open for public use. It's a tradeoff. We get to do business (and pay taxes and provide jobs), Cinda gets a market for low grade wood, and everyone has open space for hiking and fishing and hunting. We think it's a pretty good deal. So does Cinda. And we think you will too if you take a close look at what Russell Biomass has to offer.

Russell(Bio)Mass

Bringing new energy to the Valley.