

Heating the Midwest with Renewable Biomass

Joint Action Team Monthly Call Minutes

(Biomass Resources & Demographics, Biomass Policy & Benefits, and Biomass Combustion Technologies)

Tuesday, January 16, 2018 – 1:30 PM CT

PURPOSE: To advance the goals and planning activities of the Joint Action Teams and the overarching Heating the Midwest with Renewable Biomass Initiative (HTM), specifically as it relates to the annual conferences and growing biomass thermal and combined heat and power market opportunities.

FACILITATOR: Gregg Mast, Earthtech Energy & HTM Steering Committee member / Biomass Policy & Benefits Chair (primary); Becky Philipp (secondary)

CALL PARTICIPANTS: Brian Bluhm, NE CERTs, Alan Doering, AURI, Fritz Ebinger, CERTs, Greg Flogstad, MRRPC, Ron Gagner, Northwest Manufacturing/WoodMaster, Joel Haskard, CERTs, Kevin Hennessy, MN Department of Agriculture, Mark Knaebe, USDA Forest Service, Gregg Mast, Earthtech Energy, David Neumann, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Becky Philipp, AURI, Sean Ranum, NWRDC, Suzanne Rhees, BSWR, and Mikey Weitekamp, Environmental Initiative

MEETING AGENDA:

- I. Welcome
 - A. Roll Call
- II. Review of the Minutes/Action Items
- III. Guest Speaker: Mikey Weitekamp, Senior Project Manager, Environmental Initiative
Overview and update on [Project Stove Swap](#)
- IV. [2018 CERTs Conference](#) Planning: Fritz Ebinger and Joel Haskard, Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)
Input sought from call participants regarding Biomass Energy Session and key take-aways
- V. Midwest Biomass Exchange Project Update (David Neumann)
- VI. Biomass Combustions Technology Action Team Discussion (Andrew Murray)
- VII. Biomass Policy & Benefits Action Team Discussion (Gregg Mast)
- VIII. Biomass Resources & Demographics Action Team Discussion (Becky Philipp/Alan Doering)
- IX. Current Happenings/Needs of the Industry
- X. HTM Steering Committee Update
 - A. 2018 HTM Conference Planning
 - B. Activities Update
- XI. Next Conference Call
Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at 1:30 PM (CST)

Call convened at 1:30 PM CT

- I. Call participants were welcomed and facilitated discussion ensued.
- II. November and December, 2017 call minutes were reviewed. Approved with no changes.
- III. Guest speaker Mikey Weitekamp of Environmental Initiative (EI) provided an overview of EI's work and provided call participants with background and latest information on Project Stove Swap. Program offers cost-sharing incentives to change-out/convert to new, high-efficiency gas and wood burning appliances, boilers, fireplaces, etc. Works with a network of vendors and installers throughout Northern Minnesota and assists customers through the entire process. Program has been running for a year with 280 applications for installations received. 20-30 percent of applicants back-out but have installed 240 appliances. Program focuses on helping customers save money, improving safety, and lowering emissions/improving air quality and health benefits. Mikey also mentioned an upcoming Feb. 2 meeting with Clean Air Minnesota and invited any call participants interested in joining the call to reach out to him. Questions were taken from the group members and included opportunities to share success stories in communities and via press releases, mix of change-outs to-date (50 percent gas, 30 percent fireplaces, and ~17 percent outdoor wood boilers; very few pellet appliances due to retailers selling pellet appliances and also lack of local pellet manufacturers). 20 percent of funds are for income-qualified changeouts. Must be for primary/or major heating source. Existing funding through June, 2018 in Northern Minnesota and efforts are underway to find additional funding and to expand the program statewide.
- IV. Joel Haskard and Fritz Ebinger from CERTs provided an overview of the upcoming 2018 CERTs Conference on March 28 and 29th. Asked for input/feedback from call participants regarding speakers/success stories to include as part of a one-hour session on recent advances in biomass energy. Seeking 2-3 speakers and would also have a Q&A at the end of the session. Focus is on how biomass is a viable clean energy option; rural, ag, commercial, residential markets; project success and 2 to 3 things that people could take away from the session. An example was provided regarding Viking poultry barn heating project using biomass. Other suggestions offered included: success stories from Project Stove Swap; Kevin H. suggested Itasca Community College wood boiler installation and Mankato State University emissions testing. Suzanne R. suggested Camp Ripley; others suggestions please direct to Joel and Fritz.
- V. David Neumann provided an update on the Midwest Biomass Exchange project. Work took place over the past month to get an amended contract to extend developers contract through the end of February as they weren't going to make the

original deadline. There have been issues working through the network engineering and migrating to a new server and the developer also got a job this past fall. Has not been a lot of progress in the last month. Work continues to renovate the site including, how biomass is listed and described, and porting listings over to the new structure. Waiting to see what the developer has done over the past few weeks and an upcoming call to get status will take place in the next week or two. Also working on a progress report for TJ to process the first invoice.

- VI. Andrew Murray was unable to join the call so no new updates for the Biomass Combustion Technologies Action team.
- VII. Gregg Mast reminded call participants of Farm Bill discussions that are on-going and could provide opportunities for biomass thermal/rural economic development; also, his team at Clean Energy Economy Minnesota will be working to pass a residential biomass heating system tax credit in MN during the upcoming legislative session that begins February 20.
- VIII. Becky Philipp shared that the Resources and Demographics Action team will be hosting the next Joint Action Team call. Seeking ideas and projects for 2018 from team members that crosses all Action Teams. Will continue that discussion in February and is seeking opportunities that will drive further installations and thermal uses forward.
- IX. Suzanne Rhees mentioned there is a draft of the lands watershed working lands program up on their web page. She will send the link to Becky. The report will be delivered February 1 to the MN Legislature and will be open for comment for another week. The focus is on agricultural biomass.

Greg Flogstad asked about NRRI – developing biomass feedstock on par with coal via torrefaction process. Gregg Mast will put him in touch with NRRI. Mark Knaebe also shared some of the details and characteristic of the biocoal product and process.

- X. Becky provided an update on the HTM Steering Committee. Conference planning is moving ahead nicely. Tim Portz will be hosting a planning call January 17 to receive input/feedback on developing content, speakers, etc. HTM has also sent out an email blast notifying folks of this opportunity. New officers for 2018 have been elected: Chuck Gagner, Northwest Manufacturing/WoodMaster is President; Stacy Cook, Koda Energy, is Vice President; TJ Morice, TNT Ventures is Secretary/Treasurer; At-large officers include Chris Wiberg, Timber Products Inspection and Becky Philipp, AURI (Becky's term is scheduled to end on March 1). Brian Brashaw, USDA Forest Service, will also serve as a special liason. *Reminder to all, we are still looking for new Chairs for Action Teams!*

- XI.** Brief discussion was held as to whether to hold the Joint Action Team calls on the third Monday or Tuesday of each month. Consensus was the third Tuesday of each month would work for now and could always be revisited.

Next scheduled call for the Joint Action Team will be held on Tuesday, February 20 at 1:30 PM CT.

Dial-in number: 515-739-1222; code 630516

Call ended at approximately 2:40 PM CT.

Respectfully submitted by Gregg Mast