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Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry: Biomass Guidelines

Given the growing interest in biomass as an alternative for fossil fuels, it is timely for the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry to articulate its policy with respect to standards for wood biomass harvests. It is expected that projects receiving permits, approval or other forms of regulatory endorsement, financial assistance, or incentives from the Department will comply fully with this policy.

There are two major pathways that biomass projects may follow:

(1) No public investment. In cases where the project involves no public investment, the only mandatory requirement would be compliance with existing legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act, Wildlife Conservation Act, *etc.* Public investment would include:

- grants or loans for start-up, capital, or operating costs;
- silvicultural or other land management incentives provided through Departmental programs (e.g. Forest Enhancement Program, ALUS); or
- green credits or certification from Government.

(2) Public investment. In cases where the project anticipates either direct capital or operating assistance, or the involvement of our forest management programs (e.g. for post-harvest planting or management), our policy will be to ensure proposals meet additional standards as follows:

(A) No land conversion (harvest area will remain in forest production) –

- I. All harvest sites will require a pre-harvest management plan meeting the standards set out in the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division's *Ecosystem-based Forest Management Manual*;
- II. All harvests must be in compliance with the standards set out in the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division's *Ecosystem-based Forest Management Manual*;
- III. For clearcut harvests, only the tree bole may be removed, with branches and foliage to be spread throughout the harvest site (i.e. no whole tree removal);
- IV. For commercial thinnings and other non-clearcut harvests, whole tree harvest is allowed, but stumps must be left *in situ*; and
- V. All biomass harvest sites must be mapped via GPS and the map files submitted to the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division

(B) Land conversion (harvest area is to become agriculture or another non-forest use) –

Clearcut harvests on sites being converted to agriculture or other non-forest uses are exempt from the management plan requirement and other standards of the *Ecosystem-based Forest Management Manual*. In such cases, the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division will monitor the harvest site for a period of 10 years or until the conversion occurs. If conversion does not occur within this time, penalties may be levied for non-compliance with the standards of the *Ecosystem-based Forest Management Manual*.

To compliment these standards and encourage sustainable forest management, the Department will work to educate land owners and the forest industry about highest and best use of wood products and ways that fuel wood harvest can be used to enhance forest quality.