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Environmental Quality Council
Legislative Environmental Policy Office
P.O. Box 201704
Helena MT 59620-1704

RE: Air Quality Permits for portable biomass grinders and chippers.

Dear Council Members:

It has recently been brought to our attention that there may be some inconsistencies within the Department of Environmental Quality in how the department is addressing the biomass issue. While we discuss the environmental and social benefits of biomass harvest and alternate utilization of woody biomass in this forum, the air quality division of the DEQ seems to be making achieving that goal more difficult.

We understand that DEQ has made the determination that portable biomass chippers and grinders require the same type of air quality permit as is required of gravel crushers and asphalt plants. Clearly the impacts and air quality concerns of gravel and asphalt activities are *not* the same as with the activity of grinding or chipping biomass. This type of permit requires an annual fee for each piece of equipment, periodic reporting of volume processed, a fee per ton processed, and a 10 day notice before moving to the next site.

Unlike asphalt and gravel crushing, grinding and chipping operations are extremely mobile, often only spending a day or even a few hours at any one site. Due to the unpredictability inherent in working in the woods, planning where you will be the next day is difficult and 10 days is often impossible. The air quality impacts associated with biomass processing are minimal and generally are limited to the emissions of the diesel engine running the machine. These engines already must meet existing emission standards. The air quality impact of processing biomass pales in comparison to the alternative impacts of open burning or decomposition of the slash and biomass. If this type of permit process and fee structure is imposed, it will be a logistical nightmare for both contractors and the agency adding significantly to the cost for both parties and reducing the likelihood of successful utilization of biomass.

The logistic and economic challenges surrounding biomass utilization are already difficult enough to overcome without additional unnecessary permits and regulations. This type of air quality permit is not necessary to protect human health and welfare. We ask that you work with the department to ensure consistency throughout the DEQ in achieving the broader goal of better biomass utilization resulting in overall reduction in open burning, improved air quality and other environmental and social benefits.

Sincerely,

Paul R. McKenzie C.F.
Lands & Resource Manager
F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.

EQC
MARCH 4, 2010
EXHIBIT 7