BLACK LIQUOR AND WOOD WASTE: DIRTY ENERGY SOURCES

Black liquor is a carbon-intensive byproduct of the paper milling industry and wood waste includes mill residues, brush, yard waste, and leftovers from saw timber forestry.

While the carbon content of black liquor and wood waste is on par with or greater than coal, the dirty fuels have masqueraded as ‘clean’ energy sources and made their way into Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Renewable Portfolio Standards are designed to promote clean sources of energy, not outdated, polluting energies like black liquor and wood waste.

It’s time to remove black liquor and wood waste from Maryland’s RPS. Ratepayer dollars should be supporting the growth of clean renewable energy rather than outdated, dirty sources.

THE PROBLEM: AN ASSAULT ON OUR HEALTH AND WALLETS

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the carbon content of black liquor and wood waste is on par with or greater than coal. Coal plants represent the largest source of climate-disrupting carbon pollution in the United States. More carbon pollution will bring increasingly frequent and extreme weather patterns like Superstorm Sandy and widespread droughts that affect food supply.

Moreover, black liquor and inefficient wood waste facilities generate health-hazardous emissions of sulfur dioxide, arsenic, and lead at levels greater than or equal to fossil fuels. These pollutants can lead to serious health complications, including more asthma attacks, respiratory illnesses, and premature death.

While black liquor is posing serious threats to public health, Marylanders are footing a costly bill. In 2012, Marylanders paid 22% more for black liquor renewable energy credits than for clean, land-based wind power credits.

THE SOLUTION: PROMOTE AUTHENTIC CLEAN ENERGY LIKE WIND AND SOLAR

By removing black liquor and wood waste from its Renewable Portfolio Standard, Maryland can achieve the intention of its RPS in the first place: to promote clean energy that protects public health and inspires local job growth.

While states like Delaware and New Jersey get over 70% of their RPS energy from wind and solar, those sources have made up only 13% of Maryland’s standard over the last seven years.

Promoting authentic clean energy sources like wind and solar has the potential to bring thousands of new jobs to Maryland and clean up the air.

We need action now. This year, the Maryland General Assembly should pass bills SB 734 and HB 747 to remove old, dirty black liquor and wood waste from its Renewable Portfolio Standard.