



Governor Cooper: Don't let logging be your legacy

Governor Cooper,

Our forests are our greatest natural resource in North Carolina. They support biodiversity, remove carbon from the atmosphere and provide natural protection in rural communities from more severe flooding and drought. When forests are logged, they release the carbon that they have stored over decades and hundreds of years.

The [NC Clean Energy Plan \(Oct 2019\)](#) states: *“Currently, the wood pellet industry does not contribute to NC’s energy generation portfolio and does not advance NC’s clean energy economy.”* (p. 25).

In spite of this cautious and critical view, our state has provided over [\\$7 million in subsidies](#) to support and expand this industry. The five NC-based wood pellet facilities clearcut over 60,000 acres per year.

NC exports more wood pellets than any other state in the nation. The subsidies and permits granted to the industry are antithetical to the stated purpose and goals of the NC Clean Energy Plan. From 2013 - 2020, [Enviva logged 300,000 acres of NC forests](#). This released 28 million tons of CO₂e during harvest, transport, production, and combustion, an amount equivalent to an additional 14 million tons of coal burned, or six and a half coal plants operated for a full year.

Following emissions from fossil fuels and industrial agriculture, industrial logging is the [third major cause of rising carbon emissions](#) in North Carolina. The export of our most important natural resource against climate disruption for the purpose of burning overseas is contrary to a science-based and commonsense approach to climate risk assessment and resilience.

All five counties with pellet production plants – Hertford, Northampton, Robeson, Richmond, and Sampson - are Tier I counties. In the five census tracts where the facilities are located, the percentage of people of color ranges from 55.4% to 90.5% with an average of 64.5%, the poverty level ranges from 15.4% to 40% with an average of 26.8%, and the child poverty rate averages 43%.

The wood pellet industry is having a huge and unaccounted for impact on our forests, climate, and the well-being of North Carolina residents. Yet the rapid expansion of this industry has occurred without any meaningful public or policy discourse.

For all of these reasons, we petition you to take the following action:

- (1) Direct the NC Department of Commerce and all other state agencies to halt all future subsidies, grants, and incentives for proposed industrial energy projects that are not a part of the NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) Clean Energy Plan and Governor Cooper's Executive Order 80 on Climate Change.
- (2) Direct the NC DEQ to deny all future permits for proposed industrial energy projects that are not a part of NC DEQ's Clean Energy Plan and Governor Cooper's Executive Order 80 on Climate Change.
- (3) Direct the NC DEQ to review the impacts of intensive forest harvesting activities for the production of wood pellets and complete a report on the forest, climate and community impacts of the wood pellet industry in North Carolina to be completed by Nov. 1, 2021.
- (4) Direct the NC DEQ to acknowledge and measure the greenhouse gas emissions of industrial logging in North Carolina by: (a) updating the carbon accounting methodology of the land use and forestry sector in the state's greenhouse gas emissions inventory; and (b) cataloging the emissions of the forestry industry separate from any net-growth benefits.

Please respond to this petition within the first one hundred days of your new term. Just as President Biden is addressing major climate change issues in his first one hundred days, we urge you to do the same for the sake of environmental and public health in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

[CONSTITUENT'S NAME]