June 14, 2016

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Mikulski, Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of our millions of members, we are writing to urge you to reject anti-environmental policy riders that threaten our air, land, water and wildlife on the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill. We are particularly concerned about language that would undermine efforts to address climate change by mandating policies that fail to account for the carbon pollution emitted by biomass power facilities. Such language has already been attached to the House companion bill, and would set a dangerous precedent for climate science by proposing fundamentally flawed carbon accounting.

Wood-burning power plants emit more carbon pollution than fossil-fueled plants for each unit of energy generated. This excess carbon pollution can persist in the atmosphere for decades, even accounting for any new trees that could replace those that are cut down – well beyond the time that we need to achieve emissions reductions to address climate change. Ignoring this pollution would undermine the carbon pollution reductions of the Clean Power Plan, and produce more unhealthful soot and smog pollution. It would also undermine our commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement, which are premised on achieving the full potential increase in our national forest carbon stocks.

Moreover, any policy rider would amount to legislative interference with what should be a science-based policy. Sixty-five scientists and researchers wrote Congress earlier this year to warn against attempting to settle scientific issues by legislative decree. The Washington Post and New York Times have editorialized against similar efforts to force agencies to treat biomass as carbon neutral no matter what the science says. The EPA’s treatment of bioenergy continues to be informed by the agency’s Scientific Advisory Board review of the carbon impacts of bioenergy. The agency has committed to assess the carbon pollution impacts of bioenergy. Any biomass rider would pre-empt that process and undermine the agency’s authority.

Scientists, activists, and politicians around the world agree that we need to reduce carbon pollution as soon as possible to prevent catastrophic warming of our planet. Ignoring emissions from biomass power plants does nothing to stop the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and could increase carbon pollution. We urge you not to include any anti-environmental riders in this year’s appropriations bill that threaten our air, land, water and wildlife, including riders that would fail to account for the carbon pollution emitted by biomass power facilities.

Sincerely,

ActionAid USA
Arise for Social Justice
Battle Creek Alliance

Beyond Toxics
Biofuelwatch
California Chapparral Institute
California Communities Against Toxics
Center for Biological Diversity
Central Coast Forest Watch
CLASS
Clean Air Task Force
Community Research
Dogwood Alliance
Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch
Environment America
Environmental Protection Information Center
Florida Environmental Justice Network
Florida League of Conservation Voters
Food & Water Watch
Friends of the Earth
Glob Aaliance IA
Green Delaware
Greenpeace
Indigenous Environmental Network
Kentucky Heartwood
Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Natural Resources Defense Council
Neighbors Against The Burner
Oregon Climate
Oregon Wild
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Physicians for Social Responsibility
PT AirWatchers
Rachel Carson Council
RESTORE: The North Woods
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Sequoia ForestKeeper®
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Springfield Climate Justice Coalition
Stand
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network
SustainUS
The Enviro Show
Union of Concerned Scientists
WildEarth Guardians