

The Clean Heat standard provides the essential path for Vermont's transition from a reliance on fossil fuels imported from afar to renewable fuel sources generated or grown regionally. The narrative that the climate future does not include wood heat, as promoted by Standing Trees and their supporters, is misguided.

When we first bought our drafty home in White River Junction, the sole source of heat was an inefficient 40-year old propane boiler. We had an energy audit, weatherized, insulated, and installed heat pumps and solar. The upfront cost was high, but our annual costs are now a tiny fraction of our first winter with propane. The heat pumps are fantastic, a marvel of science, and keep the house at a tolerable temperature, but to keep the house from freezing during cold snaps or power outages and maintain a portion of the house at a comfortable temperature we rely on a wood stove. We burn less than a quarter cord a year, harvested right from our backyard.

As a forester, I know that the CO₂ that my wood stove emits does end up in the atmosphere, but I also know that Vermont's forests absorb CO₂ each growing season. Forest Parks and Recreation's estimates show that Vermont's forests add 2.4 million cords in growth per year while approximately 1.4 million cords of timber are harvested. <https://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/vermonts-forests>

A meaningful portion of that annual harvest is already diverted for firewood or biomass energy, providing Vermonter's with a local source of heat and electricity. But what that statistic illustrates is that every year Vermont's forests are growing (sequestering) more biomass than is being harvested. In fact, it's enough of a surplus that Vermont's 266 thousand households could each burn an additional 3.7 cords of wood. I am not suggesting we do that, but I am suggesting that the forests that blanket the Green Mountain state have both the capacity to serve as an important sponge for atmospheric CO₂ and as a renewable fuel source.

Building on Vermont's existing incentives to help more Vermonter's make the same transition that we have would result in significant and meaningful reductions

in fossil fuel consumption. The Clean Heat standard represents a well-thought out policy to build on those incentives and the final standard should include our abundant renewable resource growing right in our backyard.