RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

Forest Loss, Biodiversity Impacts and Biomass

Factsheet

The rapid expansion of the wood pellet industry in the U.S. Southeast has intensified logging in some of the most biologically diverse forests in North America. Wetland forests, bottomland hardwoods, and mixed pine-hardwood ecosystems are being degraded or clear-cut to meet pellet demand. This region, often called “America’s Amazon”, provides critical habitat for migratory birds, amphibians, mammals, and threatened plant species. Increased logging for pellets accelerates habitat fragmentation, species decline, and ecosystem collapse, weakening natural climate resilience and biodiversity across the region.

Key Facts

Forest Destruction

Each year, the wood pellet industry is responsible for destroying approximately 60,000 acres of forest.[1]

Community Impact

In the past seven years, on top of its harm to local communities, Enviva Biomass alone has logged enough acreage to release 28 million tons of CO2 into the atmosphere. That’s equal to the emissions from 60-70 million cars averaging 10,000 miles a year.[1]

Monoculture Plantations

The emergence of young monoculture plantations is a primary factor contributing to the decline of temperate woodlands, one of the world’s most threatened ecosystems.[2]

Actions for Policymakers

- Direct the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service to evaluate pellet-driven logging impacts on at-risk species.
- Require pellet companies to report exact forest sourcing areas, harvest methods, and impacts on wetland forests.
- Support legislation that funds forest restoration, flood mitigation, and habitat corridor protection across the Southeast.

Our Recommendation

Congress should direct federal agencies to strengthen protections for Southeastern forests, require transparent sourcing for pellet producers, and prevent public subsidies from driving destructive logging practices in biodiversity hotspots.

Results

Taking these actions would: Slow regional deforestation and preserve biodiversity in one of the most species-rich ecosystems in the country; Protect wetlands and bottomland forests that reduce flooding and improve water quality; Maintain critical habitat corridors for imperiled wildlife; And ensure federal climate and conservation funding supports forest protection, not forest removal.

Footnotes

1. Rachel Carson Council, Drax: Destroyer of Forests (Rachel Carson Council, 2025).
2. Willis, J. L., Bragg, D. C., Cannon, J. B., Gandhi, K. J. K., Kidd, K. R., Polinko, A. D., Puhlick, J. J., Saenz, D., Sayer, M. A. S., Schalk, C. M., Self, A. B., Siegert, C. M., & Varner, J. M., “Assessing the Potential Impact of Retaining Native Off-Site Tree Species in Woodland Restoration,” Restoration Ecology 32, no. 5 (2024): e14119.