



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 98

Electricity - Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Qualifying Biomass

DATE: FEBRUARY 4, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

POSITION

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation urges a favorable report on HB 98 from the House Economic Matters Committee. This legislation removes “mill residue” also known as black liquor from the list of qualifying biomass in the State of Maryland’s Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard.

COMMENTS

Black liquor is a waste product from pulp and paper mills that contain hundreds of chemical constituents that when burned for energy emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides, all of which are potent greenhouse gases.¹ Greenhouse gas emissions threaten the Chesapeake Bay through climate change and its effects.

Warmer waters exacerbate the Bay's dead zones, stressing fish including the Bay's iconic striped bass. The EPA predicts that a three-degree overall air temperature increase could increase the heat-related human death toll. Storm surges combined with higher sea levels and increasingly erratic storm activity may flood thousands of low-lying areas in Maryland, many of which are occupied by economically disadvantaged residents.

HB 98 removes black liquor as a qualifying source recognizing the fact that even though the fuel source is renewable, it is not environmentally clean. While Maryland’s last pulping facility has now closed, the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard currently allows Maryland to purchase renewable energy credits from facilities in any state within the Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Maryland Interconnection (PJM) grid. By ending the State’s ability to purchase credits from black liquor, HB 98 removes the subsidy for black liquor emissions throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation urges a favorable report on HB 98. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist at 443.482.2168 or dmyers@cbf.org.

¹ Available and Emerging Technologies for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Pulp and Paper Manufacturing Industry, Office of Air and Radiation, Environmental Protection Agency, October 2010, available at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-12/documents/pulpandpaper.pdf>

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513