



Can't see the forest for trees
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Canada's forest industry to turn over a new leaf
Re: Oct. 30

While certainly laudable, the forest industry's claim to be carbon neutral by 2015 needs to be seen for what it is: largely based on technicalities. To the extent that these claims have any basis in efficiency gains per unit of product and recycled content, kudos should be extended. But peeling back the veneer of the claim by the Forest Products Association of Canada, it becomes apparent that this is not primarily about conservation measures but about interpretation of rules.

The first technicality here is in the way Kyoto rules currently assume full carbon-dioxide release once a tree is cut. That means that energy derived from any of the "waste" material taken off of the forest, or generated in the mill, is referred to by some as being "carbon neutral." To the atmosphere, burning this material is still an input – more carbon dioxide is more carbon dioxide.

The second major technicality is that accounting rules typically place secondary emissions from hauling wood and products into the "transportation sector." This lumps them in with everything else on the road and rails, hiding the true carbon footprint from sight. This is extremely convenient for this industry because the emissions generated from trucking are one of this industry's biggest carbon footprints.

This is particularly important in Canada's boreal forest, where haul distances are much greater than most other jurisdictions. These emissions are almost always generated from the burning of vast quantities of diesel fuel. It's absurd that these emissions would not be attributed to this industry.

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