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As Demand for Wood Heat Grows, Report Card Finds Few States Ready to Tap its Potential - and Manage its Drawbacks

California, Colorado, Oregon, New Hampshire and Washington State lead the way on promoting cleaner renewable wood heat

America's oldest heating source – firewood – is experiencing a comeback, with wood heat soaring 50% – 80% in the last decade in some states, but only a handful of states are prepared to leverage American's newfound enthusiasm wood heat.

A report released today, the “Residential Wood Heat Report Card,” by the Alliance for Green Heat, finds that most states do little to promote and manage what is often the second or third most popular heating fuel in hundreds of counties around the US.

“Wood heat is overwhelmingly America's most common form of residential renewable energy, but states are just beginning to tap into its potential to drastically lower fossil fuel use while managing emissions,” said John Ackerly, President of the Alliance for Green Heat.

“Already, homes with wood and pellet stoves displace about 17 times more fossil fuel than homes that have solar panels. The states that tap into this potential of clean wood heat can create thousands of jobs, improve energy security and keep tens of millions of heat dollars in their own state,” Ackerly noted.

According to the US census, about a quarter million more Americans are heating primarily with wood than in 2000. In six states, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio and Wisconsin, the number of Americans heating with wood rose between 50 – 80%.

The Alliance graded each state on six categories, including policies that help reduce wood smoke, promote the cleanest appliances and restrict the most polluting ones, and provide educational information on best wood heat practices.

The states that got the top grades, such as California, Colorado, New Hampshire, Oregon and Washington are states that are often at the forefront of developing

renewable energy, but are not necessarily the states with the highest per capita wood heat use.

The top-scoring states were the ones who: 1. Restricted installations of more polluting wood appliances not certified by the EPA, 2. Provided Energy Star–like incentives for residents to buy the cleanest stoves, and 3. Provided extensive educational information on clean burning practices.

The report identifies a growing array of creative and cost-effective ways to leverage the use of a renewable energy while mitigating emissions. For example:

- **New Hampshire** provides a rebate of up to \$6,000 for residents to buy an ultra-clean automated central pellet heat system, similar to the technology that is routinely incentivized in much of Europe.
- Pending legislation in **Maryland** would provide a pellet stove rebate for any resident and a wood stove rebate for rural residents whose primary heat is oil, electric or propane.
- **Arizona** provides a \$500 tax deduction to install an EPA certified wood stove in a fireplace, preventing excessive pollution from traditional fireplaces.
- **California** and **Washington** are the only states that require new stoves to be EPA certified, whereas the other 48 states allow cheap, unregulated stoves (often made in China) to compete against clean EPA regulated stoves made in America.
- **Oregon** requires old uncertified wood stoves to be removed and destroyed upon sale of a home.

The Report Card sheds new light on a very old form of renewable energy that is still used by millions of Americans. The EPA estimates there are about 12 million wood stoves compared to only 300,000 solar photovoltaic systems in homes in the US. “This country can achieve renewable energy and energy independence goals significantly faster and cheaper by deploying modern thermal biomass systems,” said Mr. Ackerly.

American stove manufactures produce some of the cleanest stoves in the world, up to 90% cleaner than EPA requirements, but most Americans are still using older, polluting models. Pellet stoves, invented in Washington State, are exceptionally clean but America has done little to incentivize them while Europe has produced tens of thousands of jobs in the pellet sector.

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The Alliance for Green Heat educates the public, the media and policymakers about wood and pellet heat and its importance to low and middle-income populations. The Alliance is a non-profit 501c(3) organization based in Takoma Park, Maryland. Funding for this Report Card, and for other Alliance programs comes in part from the Wood Education and Resource Center of the U.S. Forest Service, foundations and private donations.