



August 21 2009

North American Biochar 2009 a Success

North American Biochar was held August 9 - 12, 2009 at the University of Colorado, Boulder CO, USA and was a huge success. IBI congratulates the host, The Center for Energy and Environmental Security (CEES) at the Colorado Law School. The conference had 325 participants, with 18 sessions that were run over 3.5 days with 80 speaking contributors and 40 posters.

The US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, gave the keynote address and Dr Susan Solomon from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration opened the conference with a comprehensive overview on the challenges of climate change.

The general topics of policy, technology, environment, history, and business were covered at the conference. Additionally, outside of the formal sessions, working groups pushed forward agendas on characterization standards, a formal U.S. regional biochar group, and sustainability standards. Multiple businesses at scales from cook stove to refinery were able to share their knowledge and make connections to further their business efforts.

At this time, CEES is developing a website (<http://cees.colorado.edu/northamericanbiochar.html>) that will archive the papers, posters, presentations, a directory, a photo gallery, and more. This information will also be linked to the IBI website.

The conference host, the Center for Energy and Environmental Security (CEES), would like to thank all of the sponsors, review committees, contributing authors, and participants. Without their dedication, the mutual goals of advancing biochar would not have been met. Please join IBI, CEES, and the rest of the working community over the next year to move forward on international and U.S. policy, technology demonstration and deployment, and standards and best-practice development.

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IBI in the Policy Arena: How to Get Involved

IBI is engaged in the international policy and selected domestic policy arenas where we currently have a presence. We receive many offers from biochar supporters asking how to engage in promoting appropriate policies for sustainable biochar production and utilization systems within national and international policy frameworks. Below are some suggestions and resources that we have for support and engagement.

The IBI website also contains this information (<http://www.biochar-international.org/policy/getinvolved>), which will be updated as new opportunities arise.

Biochar in the US Domestic Policy Front

(1) Educate Federal, State, and Local Lawmakers and Policymakers About Biochar

In the United States, IBI has been working to educate lawmakers and policymakers about the potential of biochar as a sustainable climate mitigation and adaptation tool, as well as one that can enhance the soil resource and provide multiple ancillary environmental and ecosystem benefits. As a participant in the biochar community, perhaps the most important thing that you can do is educate others about the merits of biochar.

Action: Contact your elected officials at the federal, state, and local level to educate them about biochar and its many attributes.

- IBI has developed 1 page factsheets available on the website (<http://www.biochar-international.org/publications>).
- IBI has also developed information in a question and answer format which addresses some of the questions that are most frequently asked (<http://www.biochar-international.org/biochar/faqs>).
- Also, see IBI Board Chairman Dr. Johannes Lehmann's recent testimony on biochar before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, delivered on June 18, 2009 (http://www.biochar-international.org/sites/default/files/Written_Testimony_Lehmann_final.pdf).
- If you do not see the type of information you need here or on IBI's website, please contact us at info@biochar-international.org.

(2) Biochar R&D Program in the 2008 Farm Bill:

IBI worked with members of the US Congress to include a new high-priority research program that became law in the 2008 Farm Bill. The Biochar R&D Program is in the Research Title of the Farm Bill, and the language is as follows:

"Grants may be made under this section for research, extension, and integrated activities relating to the study of biochar production and use, including considerations of agronomic and economic impacts, synergies of co-production with bioenergy, and the value of soil enhancements and soil carbon sequestration."

This language authorizes this new program in law, but USDA has not yet created the program or sought funding for it (go to http://www.biochar-international.org/sites/default/files/Biochar_Research-2008_Farm_Bill.pdf for more information).

Action: Urge USDA to request funding for biochar in their budget, and urge lawmakers in the House and Senate to appropriate the funds to implement this important R&D program.

(3) Biochar in US Cap-and-Trade Legislation

IBI has been working with members of Congress to incorporate appropriate language on biochar policies within pending cap-and-trade legislation. The most important thing you can do right now is to educate members about biochar, and why it should be included in US cap-and-trade legislation.

Action: Contact your national representatives to urge them to include biochar as an eligible offset within cap-and-trade legislation. Offsets within cap-and-trade legislation provide valuable GHG emissions reductions from uncapped sectors of the economy (in this case, the agricultural and forestry sectors), and provide cost-containment for the entire cap-and-trade program, while also offering income generation opportunities for the agricultural sector and rural economies. Biochar offers significant potential GHG emissions reductions and income generation opportunities, if the appropriate supportive policies are included in legislation.

Biochar in the International UN Policy Front

IBI has been working in the UNFCCC and with our partners in the UNCCD to incorporate appropriate policies to help develop the potential of biochar as a climate mitigation and adaptation tool and as a method to help reverse land degradation and desertification globally, but also particularly within dryland regions of the world, where soils are significantly lacking in carbon. Additionally, IBI seeks eligibility for biochar systems as a credited emissions

reduction technology, as well as financing for biochar systems in developing countries.

(1) Educate UNFCCC and UNCCD Delegates About Biochar

As a participant in the international biochar community, educating countries and delegates about the merits of biochar is perhaps the most important thing that you can do. Within the UNFCCC, there has been a significant amount of misinformation about biochar and the potential for biochar as a climate change mitigation and adaptation technology, and the ancillary environmental, sustainability, soil, and ecosystem benefits of biochar.

Action: Contact your country's delegates to the UNFCCC and UNCCD to educate them about the merits of sustainable biochar systems in developed and developing countries as a means to mitigate and adapt to climate change while enhancing the global soil resource. Urge them to continue to work cooperatively to support demonstration projects, field trials, and other methods to further investigate the potential of biochar systems.

(2) Urge your UNFCCC and UNCCD Delegates to support existing biochar text in the draft Copenhagen negotiating text of the UNFCCC

Action: To help get biochar appropriately recognized and supported at the international level, ask your members and representatives of legislative bodies to support existing language on biochar within the draft Copenhagen negotiating text of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The language is included in the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) section of the text, in the form of an R&D program in the agricultural sector, between developed and developing countries, to pursue the potential for biochar systems in drylands to both reduce GHG emissions and enhance the soil resource.

The text states: "Agriculture: 134. Parties shall cooperate in R&D of mitigation technologies for the agriculture sector, recognizing the necessity for international cooperative action to enhance and provide incentives for mitigation of GHG emissions from agriculture, in particular in developing countries. Consideration should be given to the role of soils in carbon sequestration, including through the use of biochar and enhancing carbon sinks in drylands."

For the latest update on the status of the negotiations and this text, see the IBI international policy page at <http://www.biochar-international.org/policy>.

IBI Wants to Hear From You

Please help IBI by letting us know about other policy opportunities for biochar production and utilization systems. If you know of any biochar-specific policies in your country or region, please send them to IBI so we can include them in the policy section of our website. If you want to find out more about what is happening in your area and you don't see your country listed, try contacting one of the regional biochar groups as they will often have more information.

Updates on Biochar in the UNFCCC Process

IBI's Executive Director Debbie Reed was in Bonn during the 10 to 14 August intersessional informal consultations to continue working within the UNFCCC process. This is to support retention of the language on biochar currently included in the draft Copenhagen negotiating text. During the meetings, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) continued to discuss draft negotiating text in the lead-up to Copenhagen.

The biochar text being considered is contained in the AWG-LCA negotiating text, the version of which was being discussed at the Bonn meeting having been introduced on 22 June, 2009, after the last set of negotiations in Bonn in June (text found at: http://unfccc.int/essential_background/library/items/3599.php?such=j&symbol=FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/INF.1#beg).

While negotiators spent the week consolidating text in an attempt to reduce the negotiating text from 200 pages to 20-30 for Copenhagen, the discussions literally stopped at the paragraph before the biochar text (located on page 132 of the above-linked document, and labeled as paragraph 134).

It is anticipated that the next set of negotiations in Bangkok, Thailand scheduled for 28 September through 9 October, 2009 will pick up with paragraphs 134. IBI will continue to work to support retention of the text in Bangkok, and through the Copenhagen process.

Join the IBI Advisory Committee

IBI is looking for your input in updating its Advisory Committee.

The IBI Advisory Committee is a group of 20 members that serve as a review board for IBI materials, as potential contacts for reporters and other members of the press, and as advocates for biochar and IBI.

During the fall of 2009, IBI is looking to bring in new members for the committee from around the world representing different specialties, different organizations and institutions, with a focus on gender balance and a balance between industrialized and developing countries. Committee members will be asked to serve at least one 18 month term and will be encouraged to ideally serve 2 - 3 terms as desired. If applicable, members will be invited to serve on the science committee for the international IBI conference if it falls within their term.

Visit the IBI website for more information on the committee and how to submit your name or a colleague's name for consideration (<http://www.biochar-international.org/advisorycommittee>).

Creating a Biochar Characterization System

At the May 2009 regional biochar conference in Australia, a group started work on a set of guidelines for a safe biochar industry--recognizing that there are no guidelines for manufacturers, retailers, or purchasers of biochar to describe the material. These discussions were continued at the August 2009 regional conference in the US, where participants formalized a Biochar Characterization Work Group.

The work group is beginning discussion of a document entitled "Guidelines for a safe Biochar Industry". We welcome your participation in the work group or comments on the document. Please see the IBI website for more information on this initiative (<http://www.biochar-international.org/workgroups>).

Regional Updates

Far East Biochar

The following is the first Far East biochar report - just a quick snapshot on some of the current known activities in the region. A more complete picture will be available when the regional interest group has more structure and a platform for presenting information. A google-group structure is proposed as an interim platform. For more information, please see the group page on the IBI website (<http://www.biochar-international.org/regionalgroups/far/east>).

Philippines

Jochen Binikowski has been working with biochar since February 2007. He is living in and reporting from the front line, on biochar experiments with farmers in the Philippines (more information at: http://www.buddel.de/kft/biochar_production.htm).

Indonesia

An ACIAR funded project "Building more profitable and resilient farming systems in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam and New South Wales", is being lead by Dr. Peter Slavich (NSW DII). Biochar experiments are underway in Aceh and Tamworth (NSW, Australia) on rice and dryland crops.

Malaysia

Funding has just been released for the first biochar soil trial in Malaysia. The study is being led by Theeba Manickam, a researcher with MARDI (govt. horticulture agency). A number of other researchers, universities, and

agriculture organisations are expressing interest in biochar research. Overseas collaborations and funding options are being investigated. Some local and regionally specific research opportunities include soil rehabilitation (tin mining, bris) and the annual haze issue (slash&char).

Information on future, current and historical biochar work is being accumulated for reference on a future website. Any contribution to this would be welcome.

Seachar

On Saturday, August 1, Seachar hosted Dr. Paul Anderson (Dr. TLUD) for an all-day workshop in the construction of Top-Lit Up Draft (TLUD) cookstoves. The stoves can quickly be constructed from commonly available materials, and produce charcoal while providing heat for cooking (or other uses). Paul's TLUD stoves have been tested and shown to produce very low emissions of CO and particulates. The stoves can provide benefits wherever people rely on biomass for cooking. TLUD stoves use a wide variety of small pieces of biomass for fuel. The charcoal can be used as biochar to improve soil fertility, sequester carbon, and potentially provide a source of income through carbon credits.

The key to the clean operation and the production of charcoal is the separation of the production of flammable gases and the combustion of those gases. The gases are produced by the heat of the limited flame within the biomass. The flame is constrained by limiting the amount of primary air. The combustion occurs with the introduction of secondary air above the biomass zone.

There is a full report on the workshop available on the SeaChar page at the IBI website (<http://www.biochar-international.org/regional/seattle>).
