A diversity of policies have been initiated to meet climate-related goals, but movement towards an all-lands approach is still needed. Since 2004, fourteen different biomass definitions have been incorporated into federal law or the tax code.

Ten Sections of Federal Law that have incorporated different ‘Renewable Biomass’ Definitions

(Prior to 2004)

Source: K. Bracmort, Biomass: Comparison of Definitions in Legislation

The Multiple Definition Problem

Multiple definitions of renewable biomass fragments the management of landscapes by ownership class – producing sub-optimal environmental and economic outcomes.

Example: The Energy Independence and Security Act’s (EISA) Renewable Biomass Definition

EISA's renewable biomass definition determines what types of feedstock qualify for Renewable Identification Numbers (RIN).

What are RINs? Credits generated by renewable fuel producers and sold to obligated parties (gasoline producers) to comply with the Renewable Fuel Standard.

Benefits:
- Adds value to renewable biomass
- Provides biofuel producers economic incentive to produce biofuel

What types of feedstock qualify for RINs?
- Planted crops
- Planted trees
- Animal Waste
- Slash and pre-commercial thinnings from non-federal forestlands

What is the problem with this definition?
- Unfair distribution of added benefits that can be received from woody feedstock extracted from non-federal vs. federal lands
- Creates barriers for cellulosic development, fuel reduction on federal lands, and cross-land partnerships

Future Research: Exploring how a policy change can create cascading benefits

Proposed Policy Change: Unifying EISA's renewable biomass definition of slash and pre-commercial thinnings, by exchanging "...must be harvested from non-federal forestlands" to "...from forestlands, including those on public lands." (H.R. 4956)