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Beyond Toxics

1:12 PM WED AUGUST 6, 2014

Beyond Toxics Files Civil Rights Complaint Over Seneca Biomass Permit

By [RACHAEL MCDONALD](#) (/PEOPLE/RACHAEL-MCDONALD)

A Eugene based environmental watchdog group has filed a federal complaint against the Lane County Air Protection Agency, or [LRAPA](#) (<http://www.lrapa.org/>), over its decision to allow a biomass plant to increase its emissions.

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1:01



Beyond Toxics has filed a civil rights complaint with the federal government over LRAPA's decision to issue Seneca Sustainable Energy a permit to discharge more particulates into the air in west Eugene.
 Credit Seneca Sustainable Energy

The [Seneca Sustainable Energy](#) (<http://senecasawmill.com/seneca-sustainable-energy/biomass/>) plant in west Eugene burns woody debris from logging operations, and converts it into energy. The operation releases fine particulates into the air. [Beyond Toxics](#) (<http://www.beyondtoxics.org/>) Executive Director Lisa Arkin says when Seneca was seeking a permit from LRAPA she asked for a study on how the increased pollution would affect the health of the community which is home to low-income minority families. She says LRAPA refused.

Arkin: "We did everything possible within the structure set out for the public to warn them that we believe they were issuing a permit that would allow pollution to cause disparate impacts. Then, they approved the 2nd permit for Seneca which allowed them to emit even more pollution."

Beyond Toxics has filed the complaint with the U-S Environmental Protection Agency's office of Civil Rights. They're asking the agency to invalidate LRAPA's decision to allow Seneca to increase its pollutant discharges.

L-RAPA director Merlyn Hough says that the agency meets air quality protection rules and that they have seen no worsening conditions in the neighborhood in recent years.

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