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The River Reporter

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Dear Editor:

Imagine this. It will save you money – as much as half the price of heating oil. It is sustainable and carbon-neutral. It creates local jobs and could spur whole new industries for the region. Idle fields with poor soil could be put to productive use.

Germany, Sweden and other European countries have led the way, developing high-tech, super-efficient, clean-burning wood pellet heating systems that eliminate our dependence on non-renewable, fossil fuels to keep us warm in winter months. In Honesdale, The Cooperage installed such a system. In Milanville, Joe Levine and Jane Cyphers replaced their oil boiler with a solar/wood pellet system. Potentially, the cost-savings and boon to our local economy could spark a major transformation in the way we heat our homes, businesses, schools and government facilities.

On November 17, the panel of experts participating in the Pellet Heat Forum at the Tusten Theatre gave an eye-opening presentation. (See write-up in the November 28th *River Reporter*.) Kudos to Ms. Cyphers who organized the event on behalf of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability and The Solution Project.

The European companies are now partnering with firms in the U.S. to manufacture these heating systems, thus bringing down the cost of installation. As demand for wood pellets increases, prompting more local production, their cost will also come down. Earlier this month, I paid an \$876 bill to fill up my oil tank which further piqued my interest.

The farmer on the panel has been growing miscanthus grass and successfully harvesting it as a source of fuel for some of these boilers. His presentation created quite a buzz among the audience. The entire forum provoked us all to think about the possibilities.

Ron Hine
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