



California Forest Pest Council

Dedicated to protecting California's forests since 1951

www.caforestpestcouncil.org

635 N. Santa Rosa | San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

August 23, 2016

Governor Jerry Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Impact of Biomass Industry on Forest Health

Dear Mr. Brown:

The California Forest Pest Council is writing to express concern for the health of California's forests due to the potential loss of the biomass industry. Council representatives submit these comments with the purpose of ensuring that the environmental, economic, and social benefits of our State's forests are maintained.

Biomass is the only renewable energy source that provides forest health benefits. Production of electricity from natural gas, wind, solar, hydro, or geothermal provide no environmental benefits yet unlike biomass, are subsidized. Our forests are the lungs of the earth that absorb carbon, release oxygen, and provide clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, wood products, etc. Our forests must be maintained by thinning and removing excessive dead fuel loads to increase fire resiliency.

Environmental

Our forests are stressed from overstocking, drought, insect activity, and climate change and are dying and burning at alarming rates. Many forests have 10 to 20 times more trees than they are able to support. Dead and dying trees must be removed and residual trees must be thinned to reduce inter tree competition for very limited soil moisture. Without biomass facilities, dead trees, slash, and tops will not be removed from the landscape and will remain as high fuel load for future wildfires or will be piled for open burning. Either situation will result in excessive carbon emissions with negative environmental consequences. The best use of the dead trees is to use them as fuel for the production of biomass electricity and steam for use in sawmills.

Economic

Landowners are forced to remove dead and dying trees in an attempt to stop the march of death resulting from drought and insect mortality. This situation will become much more costly or severely uneconomical if there are no biomass facilities to sell wood chips to partially offset the cost of salvage and thinning.

The use of "lowest cost equals best fit" by the power companies makes biomass unable to compete as a renewable energy source. Although electricity is more expensive to produce from biomass fuel, the benefits of biomass far outweigh the cost. This cost benefit is due to the dramatic effect on forest health,

*California Forest Pest Council
Impact of Biomass Industry on Forest Health
Governor Brown - August 23, 2016*

fire hazard reduction, and fire resiliency that can offset the “mega fires” the State is experiencing. We should treat the symptom (overstocked forests with excessive fuel loads) instead of the problem (large catastrophic stand replacing wildfires, smoke, and carbon emissions). Forest fuel reduction to minimize the wildfire hazard is far more cost effective than fire suppression.

Financial incentives are needed to support the existing biomass facilities. The Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), Cap and Trade program is an excellent source of funding to keep the biomass facilities open. No other issue can provide nearly the same level of carbon emission benefit as biomass.

Social

Dead and dying trees must be removed from our forests to ensure public safety adjacent to roads, structures, powerlines, etc. Removal of many of the reported 66 million dead trees in our State’s forests and utilization as a renewable energy source to produce green electricity can greatly reduce the fire hazard in our State’s forests that is a national security risk. Treatment of our dead and dying forests now will minimize the risk of a future emergency from massive wildfires. As more of our State’s population establishes residences in the wildland urban interface, the risk of loss of life, homes, and property from hazardous fire conditions becomes more acute.

Summary

Once the biomass facilities and infrastructure are shut down, they will not come back and our State’s forests, rural economies, and environment will be adversely impacted. Production of electricity from biomass energy has significant environmental, economic, and social benefits to California. Healthy, well-managed forests provide many societal benefits and this value should be recognized by providing economic incentives to maintain our existing biomass facilities. The California Forest Pest Council would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Bob Rynearson
Chairman, California Forest Pest Council
bobr@wmbeaty.com

RGR:spc

CC: California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection