



GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
WADE CROWFOOT, Secretary for Natural Resources

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Chair, California Air Resources Board

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Chair, California Energy Commission

Patrick Wright
Director, California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Taskforce

Colleagues,

I write to request your focused collaboration this year to explore how we can continue biomass utilization as a key strategy to reduce catastrophic wildfire risks across California.

Broad consensus exists on the need to actively manage our forests. Reducing unsafe and unhealthy density of vegetation in our forests is essential after a century of excluding natural wildfire cycles. Doing so reduces dangerous wildfire threats, restores ecological and watershed health, and returns a safe, natural fire regime across our landscapes.

Unprecedented state and federal funding has vastly increased wildfire resilience projects to achieve these benefits. For these projects to be effective, outlets are needed for the huge volume of forest residues generated by these projects. Today, across tens of thousands of acres, vegetation that has been cut to reduce forest density remains in place—sometimes in piles two stories high—because there is no economically viable way to remove it. This material is either burned in open piles – with impacts on air quality – or is left in place, ready to combust in the next wildfire and drastically reducing the effectiveness of project investments. We need to expand pathways to remove and process this wood waste.

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State agencies are actively working to build markets that transform wood waste into new low-carbon products such as mass timber and sustainable aviation fuels. This work is important and promising, but currently inadequate to process existing wood waste. Converting biomass to electricity remains the primary method to remove and process low-value forest residue at scale in California today.

Legacy state energy programs that have supported small biomass-to-electricity projects have expired, and many existing and planned projects have no way forward. These endangered facilities are critical to remove and process fuel loads across numerous high fire severity zones and bridge our needs as we grow the low carbon bioeconomy for wood waste.

Rural communities, wildfire safety organizations, and the forestry sector are joining forces to explore new pathways for biomass. It is important that our agencies engage with this coalition of groups and signal support for finding solutions.

I recognize that a path forward on biomass must meet several criteria: limit or avoid electricity ratepayer impacts as we prioritize energy affordability; provide a durable program framework that attracts sustained private investment; and ensure ecologically based management of our forests. While complex, I believe a path forward is possible.

Over the past decade, our agencies and partners across our state have come together in creative ways to confront our catastrophic wildfire risk. And we've made tremendous progress. We have strengthened wildfire resilience and restored landscape health across millions of acres of land, streamlined processes so projects happen more quickly and cost-effectively, prioritized initiatives to protect communities and ecosystems; and built regional capacity to continue this work for decades to come. Now, enabling biomass utilization to continue is one more important piece of this puzzle.

In coming weeks, I request that we come together across agencies to creatively explore how we can continue to enable biomass utilization. Our work together is timely and important. Thank you very much for your consideration and partnership

Sincerely,



Wade Crowfoot
Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency