



March 16, 2021

The Honorable James Gallagher
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2158
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jim Patterson
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3132
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 1519 – SUPPORT
As Amended March 11, 2021**

Dear Assembly Members Gallagher and Patterson:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for your Assembly Bill 1519, which requires the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to create and implement a program to offset the costs of transporting fuels to a biomass energy facility. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

RCRC member counties have suffered the vast majority of the state's most catastrophic wildfire events in the last decade. In 2020, California's wildfires burned over 4 million acres and have released over 90 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. That is more than all the greenhouse emissions from industrial sources in 2018, well over half of emissions from the entire transportation sector, more than double all emissions from the commercial and residential sectors, and nearly three times the emissions from agriculture. The 2020 wildfires also resulted in widespread hazardous air quality for extended periods of time.

As you know, while California has implemented numerous programs to address the state's wildfire problem, including various forest management programs as part of 2018's Senate Bill 901 (Dodd), there is still an urgent short-term need to increase capacity for biomass utilization to help remove materials from our overstocked forests and avoid additional greenhouse gas and criteria pollutant emissions that result from piling and burning or simply leaving the materials in log decks to decay.

Biomass facilities reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including black carbon, that would otherwise result from alternative management of those materials. Without biomass facilities, the woody residuals that would be used as fuel are typically managed through open burning or are left in place to decompose naturally. This is largely because of the absence of other markets for those materials and the high cost of transportation. Unfortunately,

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residuals left in place for natural decomposition add to the fuel load and are increasingly likely to be consumed in a wildfire. A recent field study indicates that biomass energy generation results in 98-99 percent lower PM2.5, carbon monoxide, methane, and black carbon emissions compared to open pile burning (along with a significant reduction in NOx and carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions).¹

Unfortunately, there remain significant barriers to getting residuals from forest health improvement and wildfire risk reduction projects to biomass facilities. It is often cost-prohibitive to transport residuals from the forest to a biomass facility, thereby creating a perverse incentive to increase emissions above what could otherwise be achieved. AB 1519 helps to break down these market barriers by requiring the CNRA to create and implement a program to offset the costs of transporting fuels to a biomass energy facility. This bill provides a structural pathway to help provide a greater diversity of benefits from the state's expenditure of Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Funds revenues of forest health projects.

Simply speaking, AB 1519 helps break down a tremendous cost barrier in California's biomass energy barrier while encouraging the removal of hazardous, wildfire-causing fuels in our forests and wildlands.

For the above reasons, RCRC supports AB 1519. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at sheaton@rcrcnet.org or (916) 447-4806.

Sincerely,



JOHN KENNEDY
Legislative Advocate

cc: Members of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Michael Jared, Chief Consultant, Assembly Natural Resources Committee
Kirstin Kolpitcke, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus

¹ Springsteen B, Christofk T, York R, Mason T, Baker S, Lincoln E, Hartsough B, Yoshioka T. 2015. "Forest biomass diversion in the Sierra Nevada: Energy, economics and emissions." *Calif Agr* 69(3):142-149. <https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.v069n03p142>.