



Our forests are being targeted for extraction in the name of fire resilience even though the most effective way to protect homes from fire is by home hardening and the creation of defensible space up to 100 feet. However, clearing trees beyond 100 feet can exacerbate the spread of wind-driven fires. Biomass energy is being touted as a way to use the wood "waste" resulting from all the cutting, but biomass energy is not clean, not renewable, and not carbon neutral.

Protect Sonoma County Forests & Say “No” to Biomass Energy!

The Significance of Post-Fire Forests & Forest Protection

Four short videos on life and logging in post-fire forests:

<https://vimeo.com/806623485> - Regeneration After Fire (01:11mins) Post-fire regeneration supports high biodiversity in intact forests. Big thanks to the painstaking works of multiple scientists including Dr. Chad Hanson.

<https://vimeo.com/806625688>- Taxpayer dollars for logging (01:25 mins) A surprising amount of taxpayers’ dollars are used to deplete mature and old growth trees in forests - actions that are often given names like "treatments" and "ecological thinning."

<https://vimeo.com/806627213> - Woodpeckers: Homemakers of the Forest (01:38 mins) Woodpeckers create homes for other wildlife in standing dead forests (snag forests) after fire.

<https://vimeo.com/810863522> - Fire Ecology of Spotted Owls - Dr Monica Bond (01:11 mins).

Logging Contributes to Carbon Emissions

Carole King: Logging is contributing to carbon emissions: MSNBC news, March 9, 2023: <https://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/watch/carole-king-logging-is-contributing-to-carbon-emissions-164796485681> (04:51 mins)

Setting the Stage: The Truth about Carbon, Wildfire, and Biodiversity: with Dr. Bev Law (3:08-24:42), Dr. Chad Hanson, Dr. Monica Bond. Dr Bev Law, with 30 years' experience of working on carbon life cycles, says, "Harvesting more to reduce fire emissions makes emissions worse." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jkh_AGEGS8A

Dr William Moomaw and Dr Bev Law, climate scientists, on the importance of protecting mature and old growth forests: <https://theconversation.com/the-biden-administration-has-called-for-protecting-mature-us-forests-to-slow-climate-change-but-its-still-allowing-them-to-be-logged-199845>

What's Wrong with Bioenergy?

The movie [Burned: Are Trees the New Coal?](#) is essential viewing and graphically shows the problems with burning biomass for energy.

The Center for Biological Diversity's [Forest Bioenergy Briefing Book](#), March 2021, gives a comprehensive overview explaining that forest biomass power is polluting, ineffective and expensive. It is *not* clean, *not* carbon neutral, and *not* renewable.

IPCC climate scientist Dr Bill Moomaw, in [Why Keeping Mature Forests Intact is Key to the Climate Fight](#), explains that the most important thing we can do for the climate is to leave existing forests intact, and how the biomass industry is driving deforestation.

Climate scientist Dr. Bev Law advocates for [protection of forest ecosystems](#) to mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity. She explains the [life cycle assessment of bioenergy](#) and how the use of bioenergy produces net emissions. Highly recommended. See also <https://olyclimate.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/lawetal2020.pdf>

The Partnership for Policy Integrity offers a detailed and comprehensive explanation of the problems with biomass energy at any scale: [Biomass Energy Overview](#)

StandEarth's representative Maya Menenez explains the problems with biomass energy at COP 26 in Glasgow, 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARiLjE4jxok>

Vast quantities of wood from the US forests are chipped and converted to fuel pellets for export to Europe and Asia. This [BBC documentary exposes the bioenergy company DRAX](#), and although this is about the UK, the principles and the greenwashing language used in the industry are common to the US and CA as well. Greenpeace shows how [DRAX is responsible for driving environmental racism after pollution claims against its US pellet mills](#). The Dogwood Alliance published an [expose of the Nature Conservancy](#) about their support of industrial logging and wood products. This may not be happening in Sonoma County yet, but we should be aware of the pressures to move

in that direction, as evidenced by the massive amount of state legislation being considered which would promote and facilitate it here; and all kinds of work is being done to explore opportunities to advance the use of forest woody biomass for energy.

In December 2022, *Australia became the first major economy worldwide to reverse...its renewable classification for woody biomass burned to make energy...*

<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/22-12-19-CBD-PFPI-Biofuelwatch-et-al-scoping-comments-on-GSNR-wood-pellet-project-final.pdf>

YET... Billions of dollars of federal, state, and county funds are being spent [to target 1 million acres of forest per year](#) for "treatment" ("thinning", logging, prescribed burns, herbicides...) in California, in the name of fire protection and forest health. This ignores the substantial evidence (e.g. from [Dr Jack Cohen](#), and [Dr Alexandra Syphard](#), both of whom are featured in [ELEMENTAL: REIMAGINE WILDFIRE](#)) that by far the best way to protect homes from wind-driven fires caused by flying embers is through home hardening and the maintenance of [defensible space up to 100 ft.](#), and that vegetation removals, far from protecting homes, can exacerbate rather than halt the spread of fire. There is an assumption that the wood "waste" from all this "vegetation removal" needs to be disposed of somehow, and builds the case for using it for energy.

The push for Bioenergy/biofuels in California and Sonoma County

California's forests targeted as feedstock for global wood bioenergy:

<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2023/californias-forests-targeted-as-feedstock-for-global-wood-bioenergy-industry/> Golden State Natural Resources plans to build two massive wood processing facilities, one in Tuolumne County and one in Lassen County, to process and ship wood pellets by rail for export to Asia from either Stockton or Richmond, CA. Sonoma County supervisors are on the Board of [RCRC for California's Rural Counties, which in 2019 unveiled Golden State Natural Resources' proposal](#) to remove "fire fuels" from forest restoration activities in California's forests to create fuel pellets for export to Asia. 33 organizations responded with their opposition to the EIR Scoping Comments: <https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/22-12-19-CBD-PFPI-Biofuelwatch-et-al-scoping-comments-on-GSNR-wood-pellet-project-final.pdf>

The Santa Rosa Metro Chamber of Commerce is promoting a Wildfire Action Plan which includes expanded prescribed burn programs; reduced air quality regulations; promoting biomass extraction and conversion; increased timber harvesting including conversion of "currently unproductive forests and woodlands into productive timberland that has commercial value" including commercial timber and carbon credit payments. (March, 2023).

Sonoma Clean Power: According to [Sonoma Clean Power](#), 11% of the energy for its Clean Start program comes from biomass and biowaste. In February 2021, SCP was considering adding biomass to its “100% renewable” Evergreen program.

February 2021: [CLEE report](#) presented to Board of Supervisors. This document, suggesting priorities for Sonoma County’s wildfire settlement from PG&E, used as a blueprint for Sonoma County’s vegetation management program, promotes bioenergy, see especially p. 33.

February 2021: Sonoma County promotes a [Biomass Business Competition](#).

January 2021: The California Energy Commission awarded a grant of \$250,000 to [the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians](#) (Sonoma County) including to fund a study to examine the feasibility of biomass fuel and energy production from tribally-owned lands.

Alaska Airlines, with flights from/to Sonoma County airport, first used a [jet fuel made from “forest residuals”](#) in 2016 and continues to promote biofuels.

LEGISLATION – below are just some examples of California legislation promoting bioenergy:

A large number of bills are promoting or paving the way for the use of biomass energy in California, for example (as of March 15, 2023; thanks to The Climate Center’s Bill Tracker):

AB 625 (Aguiar-Curry) forest Biomass Waste Utilization Program - active

AB998 (Connolly) Biomass energy facilities reporting - active

SB488 California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program: bioenergy project: community choice aggregators - active

AB 322 Electric Program Investment Charge Program – enacted

SB 1109 California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program – bioenergy projects – enacted

AB 843 California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program - enacted

AB 2878 Forest Biomass waste utilization program – failed in committee

AB1956 Woody biomass – collection and conversion – failed in committee

AB 1519 Fuels transportation program – biomass energy facility – failed in committee

AB 1757 (C.Garcia) Natural and working lands to advance California’s climate goals - does not protect forests, relies on implementation of other statewide plans which do promote biomass energy and which have been [heavily critiqued](#) by [numerous organizations](#).

Why are Sonoma County and California ramping up their efforts now, to support this dangerous, short-sighted and misguided policy?



Above: Scotia lumber yard, credit Juan Mejia



Above: Eel River bioenergy, Scotia, credit Juan Mejia



Above: Calpella pellet plant, credit Juan Mejia

Article on local impacts: <https://mendovoice.com/2020/08/activist-protest-calpella-pellet-plant>

Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SoCoCAN!)

www.SonomaCountyCAN.org