



CALIFORNIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION



September 3, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Boxer and Feinstein:

As the Senate considers renewable energy and climate change legislation, we the signatory organizations urge you to appropriately include renewable agriculture, forest, and urban biomass as a qualified resource to meet both California and the nation's renewable energy and climate change goals.

The House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which included language similar to the 2008 Farm Bill definition of renewable biomass, but excluded some sources of biomass from much-needed restoration and forest-health improvement projects.

We recommend that a broad definition that provides increased flexibility for restoration and forest health projects be adopted for similar provisions in Senate legislation. It is appropriate to recognize biomass from federal land-management projects and operations that are in conformance with all applicable federal laws in the biomass definition to allow for the greatest possible climate, forest health and wildfire benefits for Californians and all Americans.

Utilizing biomass from forest, agriculture, and urban sources is carbon-neutral and essential to meet our nation's renewable energy and climate objectives. It is especially indispensable in California to meet the state's aggressive goals for the use of renewable sources of energy. Currently, biomass plants are capable of generating over 650 MWs of renewable power, which is approximately 1½ percent of the overall power generated in the state, and 17½ percent of all of California's renewable power. The state's own feasibility report for its Renewal Portfolio Standard (RPS) shows the feasibility of biomass for power generation to be 20-25 percent of the RPS and could make significant contributions to the production of next-generation transportation fuels.

The proper utilization of renewable biomass to meet energy and climate change needs will provide significant economic, environmental and social benefits to our state and bring timely aid to struggling rural economies. About 5-7 family-wage jobs are generated for every megawatt of power produced from a biomass power-plant.

Moreover, sound forest-management and agricultural practices will not only provide biomass for energy, but will also improve the overall carbon footprint of domestic energy supplies while contributing to long-term forest health and vitality – improving wildlife habitat, enhancing water quality and quantity, and reducing catastrophic wildfires that emit millions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases each year.



One of the goals of promoting renewable energy is to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy and replace them with domestic sources of clean, reliable and renewable energy. Critical to this objective is an inclusive definition of qualifying biomass that maintains a level playing field for market access across all feedstock sources and encompasses the full range of wood biomass, including trees and other plants, forest and agriculture residuals and byproducts of manufacturing.

We look forward to working with you on a final policy that includes such a broad definition.

Sincerely,

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