

Placer County's "If it Doesn't Make Sense" Policy:

Please be advised that Placer County has taken the position, expressed in their article published in the *Auburn Journal* on May 9, 2001, that its planning staff will be reviewing the Kings Beach Biomass Burning Power Plant Proposal to determine whether it makes sense, and if it doesn't, then it will not go forward. The article is now also a governmental document used to answer email and letter inquiries regarding the status of the project.

Keep understand, this is **in addition** to the analysis being done by Ascent Environmental (the firm hired to perform the study preparatory for the EIS/EIR and EA) that will be published separately.

As stated in the article:

*First, Placer County has not yet made a decision to build a facility. **County staff** is looking at the technological, societal, economic and environmental aspects. Those will dictate not only what size and location might be most suitable, but also, if such a facility would be feasible at all. **If any one of these four components doesn't make sense, then the project is unlikely to move forward.** (Emphasis Added)*

We applaud this additional layer of analysis and look forward to the publication of Placer County's Planning Staff's Report regarding these **four aspects in tandem** with the publication of the Ascent Environmental's analysis.

In our judgment, while "staff" is going to have a difficult time making sense out of any of these four aspects regarding the proposal for locating a plant in Kings Beach instead of Cabin Creek, we are particularly interested to see how they will deal with the topic of "**societal aspects**" since the Kings Beach proposal would locate the plant less than 1000 feet from an elementary school, in the midst of a high density residential area, closely surrounded by a thick forest, and in a Basin subject to air inversions. Cabin Creek, on the other hand, is Placer's own large industrial utility yard outside of the Basin in the middle of nowhere.

A copy of the official governmental document expressing this reporting obligation follows. The relevant paragraph is highlighted in yellow.

When writing to officials please be sure to include a reference to the publication of this report. It should arrive at the same time as the publication of the other analyses.

As best *Friends of Lake Tahoe* can determine, for most people, the notion of "**It Doesn't Make Sense**" has already been reached as a valid conclusion.

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Board of Supervisors Continue to Investigate Use of Biomass for Renewable Energy

By Fifth District Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, and
Third District Supervisor Jim Holmes

Since 2007, Placer County has been the vanguard for its efforts to improve the health of forested lands. With more than half of the County covered with forest, part of this effort includes investigating the possibility of using biomass to provide a clean source of renewable energy. There are myriad factors that must be considered before any such facility could be built in Placer County.

The Placer County Board of Supervisors continues to receive comments and questions about the proposed Lake Tahoe Basin Biomass Energy Facility. The County would like to take an opportunity to clarify what is being proposed and the environmental process to which the proposed project will be subjected.

First, Placer County has not yet made a decision to build a facility. County staff is looking at the technological, societal, economic and environmental aspects. Those will dictate not only what size and location might be most suitable, but also, if such a facility would be feasible at all. If any one of these four components doesn't make sense, then the project is unlikely to move forward.

Placer County is preparing a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, and an Environmental Assessment for the U.S. Department of Energy. This triple-agency review process is required because one of the sites being considered is within the Basin, and the project would be partially financed with federal funding. The issues being evaluated include: noise impacts, pollution levels (including air emissions and lake deposition), traffic, scenic resources, biological impacts, soils and hydrologic impacts and land use compatibility.

Because the environmental document is not yet complete, it's unknown what conclusions the analysis may reach. However, there is some information the County can share that is outside the realm of environmental review and, we believe, important in helping those interested to understand the factors that have gone into proposing this project and in the potential selection of a project site in Kings Beach.

The same public process applies to this project that is applied to any other project proposed in the Lake Tahoe Basin. There will be multiple public meetings where the project can be discussed and debated. Multiple agencies will review and comment. Both Placer County and TRPA will hold public hearings to approve, modify or deny the project. The first opportunity to comment on the project will be when the draft environmental document is

released, which we expect to happen in June or July. Copies of the draft document will be widely available to all interested parties and responsible agencies, both in hard copy and online.

Many public comments have been made expressing confusion over the proposal to locate a biomass facility within the Tahoe Basin. The Kings Beach site was initially selected for review because an existing power plant already operates at that location, the ties to the electrical grid – including a substation and transformer – are already in place, and because the site is one of few in the Placer County portion of the Tahoe Basin that is zoned for industrial use. But the fact remains that no decision has been made as to where a biomass facility will be located.

Cabin Creek, a County facility on Highway 89 near the Placer/Nevada county border, is also being considered as an alternative site. Both sites will be fully evaluated to determine potential environmental impacts associated with construction and use of either site. Until the Draft EIR/EIS is complete, the County will not know the extent of impacts, nor can the County speculate about the benefits or impacts from a facility located within the Basin versus one located outside the Basin.

The County asks that the public exercise patience and allow the environmental process (both federal and state) to work as it is intended. Then, the scientifically-analyzed facts about this project and its impacts and benefits will be known and an informed discussion about the merits of the project can begin.

Any residents or interested parties should visit the Placer County Biomass web page, which includes the Strategic Plan for Wildfire Protection and Biomass Utilization, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2007.

The link is: <http://www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/Planning/Biomass.aspx>

The Plan outlines the need for forest thinning practices to improve forest health and prevent catastrophic wildfires such as the Gap, Ponderosa, Star, Ralston, Angora, and Washoe fires. The Plan identifies the need to remove excess vegetation from its source of origin to reduce the possibility of combustion, and to find a sustainable use for the vegetation that may provide benefit to both the environment and the public.

In this regard, a biomass energy facility may accomplish several goals. If it is found to reduce overall air pollution while reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfires, then an environmental benefit would be realized. If such a facility can provide a reliable, sustainable source of electrical energy, then a public benefit may also be realized.