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\$4.9 Million Grant from California Energy Commission awarded for Forest Biomass Gasification Plant in North Fork, CA

Sacramento, April 8, 2015 - North Fork Community Power's forest bioenergy project was awarded a \$4.9 million grant, announced at Wednesday's California Energy Commission Business Meeting. The award will be used to construct one of the first forest-sourced biomass gasification plants, as well as research the emerging field of forest biomass utilization. The plant will utilize local forest biomass sustainably sourced from restoration and fuel reduction activities on local forest lands, including the Sierra National Forest. The biomass will be used to make electricity, heat and biochar - a solid carbon byproduct that is used as a soil conditioner and filter media. The project will also be one of the first projects to use forest-based fuel under California's new SB 1122 bioenergy law.

"One of the biggest challenges we face in the Sierra Nevada is the lack of wood and biomass processing infrastructure," said Jim Branham, Executive Officer for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, one of the project partners. "Projects like the North Fork Community Power Project are key to increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration and protecting our forests and communities from large, damaging wildfires." SNC provided funding for the North Fork Community Power pre-project planning work through the Proposition 84 grant program.

The grant was originally applied for in November 2014 by a diverse project team, led by The Watershed Research and Training Center, a community driven non-profit based in Hayfork, CA with a long history of promoting economic development and community engagement. The project team also includes the North Fork Community Development Council (North Fork CDC), Phoenix Energy, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council, Sierra Resource Conservation District and TSS Consultants. This project has also had strong support from Madera County, Sierra National Forest and US Forest Service Region 5, and the general North Fork Community.

"We are delighted to be able to combine environmental stewardship together with job creation and sustainable energy production for our community," said Dan Rosenberg, North Fork CDC President. "We are hoping that our plant will serve as a model for other forested communities while having a positive environmental impact and improving the fire safety of our community." The North Fork CDC is a non-profit established to encourage economic development after the closure of the timber harvest operation at the North Fork mill site in the 1990s.

North Fork Community Power, LLC is a joint venture between technology developer Phoenix Energy the North Fork CDC that will own and operate a biomass gasification facility in North Fork, CA. The plant will be built in phases with an initial 1 MW financed mainly by the California Energy Commission grant and private and community investors.

“This project is a fantastic community story and an example of what can be accomplished with a robust a public/private partnership,” said Phoenix Energy CEO, Gregory Stangl. “In the North Fork community, a sawmill was the main employer for years, and local jobs evaporated when it closed down in the 1990’s. This facility will not only make an impact on reducing fire danger and stopping wasteful ‘pile and burn’ disposal of excess forest material, but will bring back permanent jobs to a town where the forest economy used to provide them.” Phoenix Energy is an independent power producer that operates a network of small, distributed generation biomass gasification plants in partnership with businesses and communities.

The facility will primarily use sustainably harvested forest biomass that is frequently piled and burned for disposal. Additional fuel will come from local fire safe councils and the community. The facility will sell power to PG&E under California’s landmark SB1122 bioenergy law.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency focused on the environmental, social, and economic well-being of the Sierra Nevada region. The Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D Council is a four-county non-profit organization dedicated to natural resource conservation and economic development. Sierra Resource Conservation District is a special district which provides and coordinates technical, financial and educational resources to meet present or future resource needs in their service area.

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