

Other Voices
Regine Miller

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Regine Miller: Camptonville group seeks biomass-to-energy facility

Camptonville Community Partnership is a small rural community-based nonprofit organization located in the town of Camptonville in the Yuba County foothills.

CCP's mission is "Rural people working together for a safe, sustainable and healthy community." The organization has conducted programs since 1995 that promote the health and well-being of children, families and community throughout the Yuba foothills.

Beginning in 2013, CCP in partnership with the Yuba Watershed Protection and Fire Safe Council, began to facilitate the development of a small-scale forest biomass to energy facility located just south of the town of Camptonville at the former Sierra Mountain Mill site, which closed in 1994 after more than 50 years of operation.

The goals of the community-driven bioenergy facility, known as the Forest Biomass Business Center, are to create local employment, reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, enhance forest health, reduce air emissions from open pile burning, revitalize the local community, and produce renewable energy.

The Forest Biomass Business Center is proposed to be a 3-megawatt combined heat and power facility, meaning it will produce both electricity and heat using byproducts of forest management projects, namely tree tops and limbs and non-merchantable timber. The electricity produced will be sold to PG&E under the state's BioMAT program which was established by the California Public Utilities Commission in 2012 to set electricity prices for small bioenergy projects. The heat produced will be sold to businesses with heat requirements that are located alongside the bioenergy facility. Such businesses could include greenhouses, a brewery, a firewood, pole or wood pellet manufacturing facility, or a wood pallet recycling facility, to name a few.

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CCP was recently awarded a Community Capacity Land Stewardship program grant by the National Forest Foundation to help advance the establishment of the Forest Biomass Business Center and catalyze landscape scale forest restoration. The NFF award will be used to expand CCP's outreach and education efforts to include the broader Yuba foothill region and adjacent counties' boards of supervisors through community meetings, workshops, presentations, media releases, and mailers. Funding will also support the facilitation of a multi-party, community-based process to develop the Forest Biomass Business Center and make critical project decisions including establishing the bioenergy facility's ownership model and selecting a project developer.

Finally, funds will be used to help build regional capacity for entrepreneurial co-located businesses which aim to utilize the heat produced by the bioenergy facility. CCP has partnered with the Yuba-Sutter Economic Development Corporation and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to offer a series of public workshops focused on the requirements to conduct and stay in business in Yuba County, the resources and opportunities available to local entrepreneurs for developing co-located businesses, and a review of grant writing fundamentals and opportunities.

The NFF promotes the enhancement and public enjoyment of the 193-million acre National Forest System. By directly engaging Americans and leveraging private and public funding, the NFF improves forest health and Americans' outdoor experiences. The NFF's programs inform millions of Americans about the importance of these treasured landscapes.

Each year, the NFF restores fish and wildlife habitat, plants trees in areas affected by fires, insects and disease, improves recreational opportunities, and enables communities to steward their National Forests and Grasslands.

Learn more about the Forest Biomass Business Center and subscribe to its list serve for the latest news and upcoming meeting dates at <http://sites.theccp.org/fbbc/>.

Regine Miller is the bioenergy project lead for the Camptonville Community Partnership.