

Truckee biomass unit would curtail the number of U.S. Forest Service control burns

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – If the biomass facility that is proposed to be built between Truckee and Tahoe City comes to fruition, it will mean the U.S. Forest Service would be burning less material that is left over from fuel reduction projects.

It also means energy will be created and put into the state's grid.

What makes this system different than most biomass facilities is that it would be a gasification unit.



This is what the proposed biomass facility would look like. Rendering/Wood Rodgers

“It heats the wood without burning it. You don't have the smoke,” Gerry Haas with the Placer County planning division told planning commissioners last week. He said the plant would create a thermo-chemical reaction.

The two people who spoke at the public hearing at Granlibakken

conference center had mixed things to say about the Cabin Creek Biomass Facility project. The public has until Sept. 10 at 5pm to submit comments on the draft environmental impact report.

One person who spoke would like the plant to make biodiesel and do more than what is proposed. A spokeswoman for the Sierra Business Council said her group is worried federal air quality standards will not be met and would like a baseline established before the facility is built.

Placer County supervisors in 2007 adopted a plan to deal with excess wood materials.

Originally, Kings Beach had been targeted as the site for the biomass facility. However, vocal opposition nixed that idea. That is when the Eastern Regional Landfill and Materials Recovery Facility entered the discussion. It is two miles south of Truckee off Highway 89.

What is being proposed is an 11,000-square-foot, two-story structure to convert the wood waste into energy. It would be a 2-megawatt facility.

The infrastructure is in place to carry the energy that would be generated. It would go along a transmission line crossing the Truckee River to the main line.

“The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit supports the development of a biomass facility close to Lake Tahoe. We’ve worked closely with Placer County to find ways to increase biomass utilization,” USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Over the next 10 years, we will be implementing an aggressive hazardous forest fuels reduction program on national forest system lands around the lake, and a biomass facility located nearby increases our options for eliminating these fuels, while helping to address energy needs.”

If the Cabin Creek facility is built, it would be considered a pilot project, according to Haas. He said it's possible another one could be built at Forest Hill.

The draft EIR is online.