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# Auburn Journal

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## Frazzled by King Fire smoke, Foresthill looking at biomass energy plant

By: Gus Thomson, of the Auburn Journal



Armed with funding from several sources, some Foresthill residents are moving forward with a feasibility study on a plant to create electricity from forest fuels.

Now they're looking for more input from community members.

Foresthill has been threatened by fire in 2012 when the Robbers Fire moved up the canyon of the North Fork American River toward the mountain community, 17 miles east of Auburn. Periodically over the last two years, smoke has enveloped the area as wildland fires burned in the nearby Tahoe National Forest.

Under an agreement among three entities – the newly formed Foresthill Bioenergy group, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Placer County Resource Conservation District – a feasibility study is moving ahead to determine whether a bioenergy facility is feasible in the Foresthill area.

The largest portion of funding for the study is coming from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District. The \$30,000 grant will finance an examination of the technical aspects of a potential biomass conversion and power-generation facility in the area.

Duane Frink, chairman of the Foresthill Bioenergy steering committee, said Friday that the Air Pollution Control District's goal is to improve air quality and examine the "bigger picture" for areas outside Placer County.

"It will take a look at the technical aspect," Frink said. "There's still a lot of work to do after that if a feasibility study says 'yes.'"



### Foresthill biomass community meeting

When: 6-9 p.m. Oct. 29

Where: Foresthill Memorial Hall, 24601 Harrison Road, Foresthill

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Frink said Foresthill Bioenergy has several goals.

"We're a group of people who would like to see a way of utilizing some of the biomass, improve air quality and create some jobs," Frink said.

Biomass is wood from the forest that can be toasted to create a synthetic gas. The gas can be fed into an engine to create electricity.

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With piles of forest wood waste burned in piles after clearing and thinning takes place for fire safety, Frink said the idea of a plant in Foresthill should be explored more thoroughly.

Also being studied under a separate \$10,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will be the possibility of businesses locating near the bioenergy facility to use excess forest-waste feedstock as raw material for manufactured products.

Frink said the type of manufacture hasn't been identified. A site for a potential facility is also an unknown, he said.

A community meeting from 6-9 p.m. Oct. 29 at the Foresthill Memorial Hall is being held for people to ask questions and provide input on a possible bioenergy facility in the Foresthill area.

"We want people to be thinking about what they would like or not like," Frink said.

The Placer County Planning Department has provided \$5,000 to aid community involvement during the feasibility study process. And the Placer County Water Agency will provide up to \$10,000 in in-kind advice regarding power-transfer agreements, regulatory issues and power-generation sales.

The volunteer ad hoc committee was formed in 2013 to investigate the potential of locating a bioenergy conversion system in the area.

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**HD Rider** · Top Commenter · USC (University Of Solano College)  
I think it's a great idea. I hope you can get a study done and if it looks positive, I hope you can get a streamlined permit processed. Even thinning out the trees are a good thing to do. It is better to be proactive than reactive.  
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