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Nevada County Biomass Task Force to host open house on potential facility site

A public open house meeting will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 22, to share information about possible locations in the Grass Valley area for a biomass energy facility, according to a news release.

The Nevada County Biomass Task Force, a local group spearheading an effort to find ways to utilize biomass that is produced from fire safe clearing and forest management projects, will host the meeting. The Task Force will provide details on the analysis of possible facility locations that has been completed as part of a total biomass feasibility assessment process. The assessment is being completed by TSS Consultants, a Sacramento company with extensive experience in biomass feedstocks, conversion technology, facility siting and planning and project implementation.

“The Task Force has been working on this biomass issue for five years, looking at a variety of ideas and technologies to address the issue of overly dense forests and increasing fire hazard in the local community. We all recognize the need to deal with these problems in a cost effective manner. Not only would a bioenergy facility do that, but it would reduce air emissions, increase local employment and generate renewable energy,” stated Steve Eubanks, member of the Biomass Task Force.

The public open house meeting will be held 5-7 p.m., Oct. 22 at the Tahoe National Forest Office at 631 Coyote St. in Nevada City. The meeting will begin with a presentation summarizing the biomass feasibility assessment process and providing an overview of the analysis of potential biomass energy facility locations.

The presentation will be followed by a short question and answer period and then an open house format with displays related to each of the five sites that will be considered for further analysis in the feasibility assessment process. There will also be detailed information available about biomass energy facility operation. This will include site requirements, hours of operation, noise, air emissions and truck traffic. Displays will be available to show specific locations, typical biomass facility appearance and biomass energy technology.

A total of 22 sites were considered for possible facility locations. Based on a number of site criteria and attributes, the list of sites was narrowed to five that seem most feasible. Two of the sites are near the Rare Earth landscaping materials business on La Barr Meadows Road in Grass Valley. The

remaining sites are on Centennial Street near the Peaceful Valley business, near the end of Charles Drive in the Loma Rica/airport area and in Penn Valley along Highway 20, just west of the junction with Rough and Ready Highway. All five sites are currently zoned for industrial use or planned for such zoning.

A bioenergy facility would use the highly flammable forest undergrowth and chipped forest debris to produce electricity. To determine the feasibility of building such a facility in the local area, the Nevada County Biomass Task Force has contracted the completion of a detailed biomass feasibility assessment that will determine the amount of biomass that is available in the area on a sustainable basis, the type of biomass technology that is best suited to utilize the type and amount of biomass available, most feasible sites for locating the recommended technology, and overall economics of operating a local facility.

The feasibility assessment is slated for completion in mid-November. It is important to note that the assessment will not make decisions about constructing a facility or facility locations. The assessment will simply be used to demonstrate feasibility to potential developers who, if interested, will be required to do appropriate follow up with permit applications and environmental studies.

Funding for completion of the feasibility assessment was received from the U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest; the National Forest Foundation—an organization founded by Congress in 1991 to help conserve, restore and enhance America's 193-million acre national forest system; the Sierra Nevada Conservancy; and the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District. The Fire Safe Council of Nevada County is serving as the task force's fiscal agent.

Additional information about the feasibility assessment and bioenergy is available on the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County's website, <http://www.areyoufiresafe.com/resources/biomass-resources>.

For more information about this news release, contact Steve Eubanks (530-432-9821) or Joanne Drummond, executive director of the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County (530-272-1122).

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