

WOODY BIOMASS UTILIZATION

During 2016 HEF received as small grant from the California Statewide Energy Team (SWET) to explore a first phase feasibility study for biomass utilization. The HEF hired the consultant firm of TSS Consultants from Rancho Cordova, CA to review the woody biomass generated within Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Currently materials are disposed of as chips for landscape cover, open burning, stockpiling and in landfills. Biomass disposal can represent and significant cost in HEF member hazardous fuel reduction projects. The nearest operating biomass power plant is located in Woodland and will reach the end of their power sales agreement in 2020 when it will likely end operations.

A number of value added alternatives were considered. However biomass power generation shows considerable promise due to recent California policy implementation as a result of Senate Bill 1122. The legislation carves out 250 megawatts for power generation, requiring investor-owned utilities (PG&E) to implementation procedures for long-term biomass power purchases. The urban wood waste category has been allocated 110 megawatts out of the 250 megawatt total allocation.

The study identified over 400,000 Bone Dry Ton (BDT) of wood waste technically available per year in the study area: 77% from construction and demolition, 20% from residential tree trimmings and 3% from hazardous fuel reduction projects. Value added use such as feedstock for a small-scale

(3 megawatts or less) biomass power generation facility could provide an alternate market with enough value to at least recover the cost of transporting wood waste to the facility. TSS Consultants also looked at four potential locations in Oakland, El Cerrito and Richmond.

The study recommended a series of next steps. HEF members continue to investigate alternatives such as an on-site power pallet gasifier/generator from a local Berkeley company.



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The Hills Emergency Forum facilitates a cooperative approach among nine governing organizations addressing urban wildland interface fire issues in the Oakland-Berkeley hills.