

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 1666 (Rogers) – As Amended March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Forest management: biomass innovation parks

SUMMARY: Establishes the Biomass Innovation Parks Act to be administered by the California Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to identify biomass innovation parks to process wood waste, as defined, that originates in California to convert wood waste into carbon-beneficial products or end uses.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency (NRA) to establish a working group on expanding wood product markets that can utilize woody biomass, especially biomass removed from high fire hazard zones, as determined by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). (Public Resources Code (PRC) 717)
- 2) Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to establish a Carbon Capture, Removal, Utilization, and Storage Program to, among other things, evaluate the efficacy, safety, and viability of carbon capture and storage and carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies and facilitate the capture and sequestration of carbon dioxide from these technologies, where appropriate. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39741.1)
- 3) Authorizes ARB to establish an embodied carbon trading system in compliance with specified requirements. (HSC 38561.6)
- 4) Authorizes, pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (Proposition 4), \$50 million to be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to the Department of Conservation or State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission for projects in California that provide long-term capital infrastructure to use forest and other vegetative waste removed for wildfire mitigation for noncombustible uses that maximize reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, provide local air quality benefits, and increase local community resilience against climate change impacts. (PRC 91530)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) “Agricultural biomass residues” as crop, orchard, vineyard, or other agricultural residues, and excludes dairy manure and crops grown for the primary purpose of producing energy;
 - b) “Eligible applicant” includes, but is not limited to, state or local agencies, California Indian tribes, nongovernmental organizations, joint powers authorities, or special districts;

- c) “Forest biomass residues” means material removed for wildfire mitigation, forest restoration projects, or the protection of public safety and infrastructure, and excludes trees grown for the primary purpose of producing energy; and,
 - d) “Wood waste” as forest biomass residues or agricultural biomass residues.
- 2) Requires NRA, in coordination with California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), to identify one or more biomass innovation parks pursuant to developed guidelines.
- 3) Requires NRA to develop guidelines and facilitate a planning process for purposes of identifying parks and guidelines for purposes of soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to develop, operate, and manage a park. Requires the guidelines to include all of the following requirements:
- a) Each park shall only process wood waste that originated in California;
 - b) Each park shall only host projects that use a noncombustion technology to convert wood waste into carbon-beneficial products or end uses, including, but not limited to, engineered wood products, biomethane, clean hydrogen, and CDR.
 - c) Each park shall require its facilities to use the best available control technologies in order to minimize air pollution; and,
 - d) Each park shall establish a community benefits program.
- 4) Authorizes NRA to establish additional requirements that are related to the planning and solicitation process at its discretion.
- 5) Authorizes NRA to perform additional activities to facilitate park identification and early-stage development, including, but not limited to, coordinating stakeholders, engaging communities, providing technical assistance, and reporting to the Legislature.
- 6) Requires NRA, in coordination with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, to do all of the following:
- a) Develop regional wood waste availability assessments;
 - b) Develop new, or support existing, public agencies to facilitate long-term forest biomass residues feedstock supply from federal government and nonindustrial private lands; and,
 - c) Adopt a tracking system to trace and authenticate forest biomass origins.
- 7) Requires ARB to do both of the following:
- a) Publish on its internet website an assessment of life-cycle emissions from alternative uses of California-sourced wood waste; and,
 - b) Ensure that engineered wood products, including, but not limited to, mass timber, are included in the embodied carbon trading system.

- 8) Requires the Strategic Growth Council and the Department of Housing and Community Development to consider incorporating the use of engineered wood products in housing grant programs.
- 9) Requires the California Building Standards Commission to identify and adopt new measures that incentivize engineered wood products.
- 10) Establishes the Biomass Innovation Park Grants and Financing Program to be administered by NRA.
- 11) Requires NRA to deliver a report to the Legislature on or before December 31, 2027, containing information pertaining to the biomass innovation park. Sunsets this requirement on December 31, 2031.
- 12) Appropriates an unspecified amount of funds from the \$50 million authorized in Proposition 4 for the Biomass Innovation Park Grants and Financing Program.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

1) **Author's statement:**

California has come a long way in the response and management of large scale wildfires. We have developed a robust and well funded response system. Local communities have stepped up to increase safety by doing more vegetation management and prescribed burns, while also conducting community preparedness exercises. But one area that hasn't received as much attention is the management of the woody waste that often serves as fuel for wildfires. This bill addresses a growing need to manage this wood waste biomass in a sustainable and economically beneficial manner. It centers California in the developing industries of utilizing wood waste for engineered wood products, green hydrogen production, and encourages consolidation of currently disparate efforts. We know there is too much biomass in our natural landscapes and this bill starts us on a path to finally do something about it.

- 2) **Biomass.** California covers about 100 million acres and approximately 40% of the state is forest. State, federal, and private forest operations such as logging, thinning, fuels reduction programs, and ecosystem restoration create a huge amount of woody biomass. Some of this is brought out of the forest for use, but as much as half of the biomass is left in the forest. When residues from mastication and slash from timber harvests are left scattered throughout the forest, they act as additional dry surface fuel and serve to increase intensity and severity if a wildfire burns through the area. Often woody biomass materials are piled and burned creating air pollution, such as black carbon, or left to decay, creating methane, which has a global warming potential 28 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

California's forestry waste has increased as drought and tree die-off have provided large amounts of fuel for forest fires. According to the California Energy Commission (CEC), there are approximately 47 million bone dry tones (BDT) of biomass resource potential in

California. According to the Board of Forestry, state requirements to remove forest fuels on a combined one million acres per year will lead to 10 to 15 million BDT of forest waste biomass annually.

Implementing innovative and recommended strategies for forest fuel load reduction and creating end-use markets for biomass can encourage and ideally accelerate healthy forest management to prevent wildfire spread while ideally reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

- 3) **Biomass markets.** Biomass piles reflect the severely underdeveloped forest biomass supply chain in California. One key obstacle to effectively using them is the cost of loading and transportation, since forested areas tend to be rural, mountainous, and remote. The main use of biomass today is as a fuel for California's existing biomass power plants. Currently, there are about 30 direct-combustion biomass facilities in operation with a capacity of 640 megawatts. These biomass plants use about five million BDT of biomass per year – or about 10% of the total BDT biomass resource potential.

SB 859 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 368, Statutes of 2016, directed NRA to establish a working group on expanding wood product markets. The working group focused on the development of markets for biomass, such as biochar, cross-laminated timber, mulch, and veneer, particularly from high-hazard zones. The working group's October 2017 report, *Recommendations to Expand Wood Products in California*¹, noted that increased forest management and associated wood and biomass processing infrastructure is needed in every forest-dependent region of the state. Expanding markets for higher-value wood products and promoting localized manufacturing would help serve parts of the Sierra hardest hit by tree mortality and other forested regions where limited wood processing infrastructure exist.

According to the CEC's September 2020 report *Utility-Scale Renewable Energy Generation Technology Roadmap*, forest fire prevention through bioenergy systems is limited by cost. While wood residue and thinning collection is one of the most noticeable and currently relevant aspects of bioenergy conversion, the cost of collecting and delivering distributed wood resources remains prohibitively expensive. Air quality presents another challenge. Biomass conversion systems produce air emissions due to the combustion of biomass or through production of syngas or biogas followed by their combustion, and California's air quality standards can be prohibitive to the location and permitting of these facilities.

In its 2022 Scoping Plan Resolution 22-21, ARB stated that "expansion of biomass combustion for energy production should not be pursued and opportunities for non-combustion biomass solutions should be prioritized".¹ ARB modeled a series of advanced end-uses for woody biomass, consistent with International Panel on Climate Change science,² that play a key role in the state achieving its greenhouse gas and air pollution mitigation goals, including biomass-wood products to be used in building materials and biomass-fuels, such as hydrogen,

¹ CARB, 2022 Scoping Plan – Resolution 22-21: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/barcu/board/res/2022/res22-21.pdf>.

² IPCC, Working Group III, Mitigation of Climate Change: <https://www.ipcc.ch/working-group/wg3/>.

- 4) **Biomass Business Parks.** AB 1666 directs NRA to identify at least one biomass innovation park that processes wood waste that originated in California. Any biomass innovation park identified by the state would be required to use best available control technologies and limited to hosting projects that use a noncombustion technology to convert wood waste into carbon-beneficial products or end uses, including, but not limited to, engineered wood products, biomethane, clean hydrogen, and carbon dioxide removal.
- 5) **Understanding biomass.** The bill further establishes a number of targeted policies to incubate and scale a sustainable, non-combustion, wood waste bioeconomy in California, including:
- Directing NRA, among others, to address barriers to long-term forest biomass feedstock supply from federal and non-industrial private lands.
 - Directing ARB to develop a lifecycle assessment of alternative uses of California-sourced wood waste as well as incorporate wood products into the new Embodied Carbon program.
 - Directing the Strategic Growth Council and other agencies to incorporate the use of wood products in state grant programs.
 - Directing the Building Standards Commission to identify and adopt new measures that incentivize wood products.
- 6) **Proposition 4.** Proposition 4 authorizes \$50 million to be available to the Department of Conservation or State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission for projects in California that provide long-term capital infrastructure to use forest and other vegetative waste removed for wildfire mitigation for noncombustible uses that maximize reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, provide local air quality benefits, and increase local community resilience against climate change impacts.

AB 1666 creates the Biomass Innovation Park Grants and Financing Program at NRA and appropriates an unspecified amount of funds from the \$50 million authorized in Proposition 4 for the Biomass Innovation Park Grants and Financing Program. Notably, Proposition 4 authorized the funding for the Department of Conservation and CEC.

Appropriations for state funds are adopted through the annual State Budget Act. The Legislative Budget Committees are currently considering Proposition 4 allocations for the fiscal year 2026-27 Budget. The author may wish to work with the Assembly Appropriations and Budget Committees on proposed priorities for Proposition 4 funding for biomass purposes, and ensure any appropriation is consistent with the voter's intent for Proposition 4 funding.

7) **Related legislation:**

AB 998 (Conolly, 2023) requires the CEC to report on the utility-scale biomass combustion facilities still in operation as of January 1, 2024, and specifies information the report must contain. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 625 (Aguiar Curry) establishes the Forest Waste Biomass Utilization Program to develop an implementation plan to meet the goals and recommendations of the state's wood utilization policies and priorities and focused market strategy of specified statewide forest management plans, and to develop a workforce training program to complement the workforce needs associated with the implementation plan. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

- 8) **Committee amendments.** The *committee may wish to consider* amending the bill to:
- a) Require NRA to coordinate with CAL FIRE on the selection of the biomass innovation parks and the development of the guidelines.
 - b) Require all biomass parks to comply with state and regional air quality laws and regulations.
 - c) Provide direction to NRA, in coordination with CAL FIRE, on how to facilitate planning for biomass parks.
 - d) Change the term “engineered wood products” to “innovative wood products.”
 - e) Prioritize wood products produced in California.
 - f) Ensure Proposition 4 allocation is consistent with the intent of the bond as approved by the voters.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

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 Charm Industrial
 Environmental Defense Fund
 Life Cycle Associates
 Mariposa County Resource Conservation District
 Mote Hydrogen
 Net-zero California
 Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District
 Placer County Air Pollution Control District
 RNG Coalition
 Sierra Business Council
 Sierra Institute for Community and Environment
 Watershed Center
 World Resources Institute

Opposition

350 Bay Area Action
 Biofuelwatch
 Center for Biological Diversity
 Forests Forever

Little Manila Rising
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Sierra Club California
Sonoma County Climate Activist Network (SOCOCAN!)
Sunflower Alliance
Valley Improvement Projects
We Advocate Thorough Environmental Review

Analysis Prepared by: Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

ⁱ [Recommendations to Expand Wood Products Markets in California](#)