
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1666	Hearing Date:	July 1, 2026
Author:	Rogers		
Version:	June 25, 2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Edith Hannigan		

Subject: Forest management: biomass innovation parks: wood products

SUMMARY

This bill would enact the Biomass Innovation Parks Act, which would establish the Biomass Innovation Parks Grants and Financing Program, to be administered by the California Natural Resources Agency.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

What is biomass? Biomass is renewable organic material that comes from plants and animals. Biomass can be burned directly for heat and energy or converted to liquid and gaseous fuels through different processes. In 2023, biomass accounted for about 5% of US energy consumption. Biomass sources include wood and wood processing waste, and agricultural crops and waste materials.

Relevance to forest health. Removing small diameter woody biomass from forests through prescribed fire or mechanical or manual means can mimic natural fire regimes to restore a healthier balance of material in the forests, improving forest health and especially resiliency to wildfires. This small diameter biomass, however, does not have a high economic value, as its uses are limited for wood products. After being removed mechanically or by hand, the biomass is often pile burned. This pile burning releases carbon emissions that may be avoided by incentivizing the conversion of this biomass into energy via pyrolysis (the heating of organic material in the absence of oxygen) or other means. Incentivizing biomass conversion may also help forest health projects “pencil out,” by providing economic incentives to remove non-merchantable biomass from forests.

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 and Fire Protection, 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.

Existing Law

- 1) Requires the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) 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. (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 CEC 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 GHG emissions, provide local air quality benefits, and increase local community resilience against climate change impacts. (PRC §91530)

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Establish the Biomass Innovation Parks Act.
- 2) Define relevant terms, including:
 - a) “Agricultural biomass residues” means crop, orchard, vineyard, or other agricultural residues, and excludes dairy manure and crops grown for the primary purpose of producing energy.
 - b) “Clean hydrogen” means hydrogen derived from a production facility and associated onsite storage and processing facilities that is solely derived from biomass feedstock and/or renewable energy sources covered under the California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program.
 - c) “Forest biomass residues” means material removed for wildfire mitigation, forest restoration projects, or the protection of public safety and

infrastructure. "Forest biomass residues" does not include trees grown for the primary purpose of producing energy.

- d) "Wood waste" means forest biomass residues or agricultural biomass residues.
- 3) Require CNRA, in coordination with the Departments of Food and Agriculture and Forestry and Fire Protection, to identify one or more parks, as provided, on or before September 30, 2027.
- 4) Require CNRA, in coordination with the Departments of Food and Agriculture and Forestry and Fire Protection, to develop guidelines and facilitate a planning process for the purposes of identifying parks.
- 5) Require CNRA, in coordination with the Departments of Food and Agriculture and Forestry and Fire Protection, to develop guidelines for the purposes of soliciting proposals from eligible applicants to develop, operate, and manage a park. Require 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.
 - c) Each park shall require compliance with the air pollution regulations.
 - d) Each park shall establish a community benefits program.
 - e) Evaluation criteria that provides a preference for projects that are developed by, or in partnership with, a California Native American tribe.
- 6) Authorize CNRA, in coordination with the Departments of Food and Agriculture and Forestry and Fire Protection, to develop guidance on the following:
 - a) The relevant state and local permitting agencies that would need to provide the requisite permits in order to site and develop a park.
 - b) Guidance for a public agency and private industry to partner on a park proposal.
 - c) Pathways for marketing park-generated products or end uses, including, but not limited to, in-state feedstock buyers for biomethane and clean hydrogen.
- 7) Authorize CNRA to establish additional requirements relating to the planning and solicitation process.
 - a) Require CNRA to include guidelines that allow existing facilities to submit a proposal to expand into a park.
 - b) Require CNRA's guidelines to include a preference for projects that use mobile processing technologies.
- 8) Authorize CNRA 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.
- 9) Require CNRA, in coordination with the Departments of Food and Agriculture and Forestry and Fire Protection, to

- 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. This support may include, but is not limited to, technical assistance.
 - c) Adopt a tracking system to trace and authenticate forest biomass origins.
- 10) Require the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, in coordination with the Department of General Services, on or before September 30, 2027, to develop a strategy to support the procurement of wood products for use in state-funded projects involving the construction or reconstruction of buildings.
- a) Require this strategy to prioritize wood products that achieve low embodied greenhouse gas emissions.
- 11) Require the Council and the Department of Housing and Community Development to consider incorporating the use of wood products produced in California in housing grant programs and, if wood products produced in California are incorporated in housing grant programs, give preference to wood products produced in California by a California-based company.
- 12) Require the California Building Standards Commission to identify and adopt new measure that incentivize wood products produced in California.
- 13) Establishes the Biomass Innovation Park Grants and Financing program, to be administered by CNRA.
- 14) Require CNRA to deliver a report to the Legislature on or before December 31, 2027.
- a) The report shall contain information pertaining to the parks identified pursuant to 3).

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, "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."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

In an opposition letter, Biofuelwatch writes, "[This] bill promotes costly and polluting biomass processes that do not offer climate benefits, but do promise an array of harms to public health and the environment. For instance, if technologies like 'biomass to hydrogen' were brought up to scale such an increase in extraction and industrial forest

management to secure necessary feedstock will only exacerbate the multitude of challenges facing forest ecosystems in our state.”

Biofuelwatch investigated a proposed biomass to hydrogen project: “Driving the investigation that led to the report was the discovery by our organization that in the summer of 2024 one of the biggest timber companies in California informed state climate authorities that they were considering a US\$400 million investment in a woody biomass to hydrogen facility in Mendocino County. [...]

Our review of these documents resulting from a publicly funded feasibility study exposed the reality that converting woody biomass into hydrogen is hard, expensive, dirty and dangerous.”

COMMENTS

Biomass Business Parks. This bill directs CNRA 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.

Scaling up a biomass economy. The bill further establishes a number of targeted policies to incubate and scale a sustainable, noncombustion, wood waste bioeconomy in California, including:

- Directing CNRA, among others, to address barriers to long-term forest biomass feedstock supply from federal and non-industrial private lands.
- Directing the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop a strategy to support the procurement of wood products for use in state-funded projects involving the construction or reconstruction of buildings.
- Directing the Strategic Growth Council and other agencies to incorporate the use of wood products in state grant programs.
- Directing the California Building Standards Commission to identify and adopt new measures that incentivize wood products.

Clean-up amendments. The Committee may wish to amend the bill to address the use of a trademarked term, editorial errors, and typos. **[SEE Amendments ##1-4]**

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENT 1

Replace “CAL-FIRE” with “the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection” throughout.

AMENDMENT 2

Replace “the department” with “the Department of Food and Agriculture” throughout

AMENDMENT 3

Amend section 4821 as follows:

[...]

(m) “Office” means the Office of Land Use and Climate 40-Innovation.

[...]

AMENDMENT 4

Amend section 4822 as follows:

[...]

(c) In order to facilitate a planning process for identifying parks, the agency, in coordination with the department and CAL-FIRE, may develop guidance on all of the following:

(1) The relevant state and local permitting agencies that would need to provide the requisite permits in order to ~~to~~ site and develop a park.

[...]

SUPPORT

Net-zero California (sponsor)

3point.xyz

California Forward

California Democratic Party Rural Caucus

Charm Industrial

Clean Air Task Force

County of Placer

East Bay Regional Park District

Environmental Defense Fund

Life Cycle Associates

Mariposa County Resource Conservation District

Mote Hydrogen

Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District

Placer County Air Pollution Control District

RNG Coalition

Sierra Business Council

Sierra Institute for Community and Environment

The Nature Conservancy

The Watershed Research and Training Center

World Resources Institute

Yurok Tribe

OPPOSITION

Biofuelwatch

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