



PLUMAS RURAL SERVICES

Serving People, Strengthening Families, Building Communities

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May 30, 2012 Written Public Comment to IEPR Lead Commissioner Workshop
Jobs and Renewable Energy in California

Biomass Cogeneration Power Plants are a significant source of long-term, stable jobs in rural and frontier rural communities, in addition to being an excellent source of reliable green energy.

In contrast to other green energy projects, such as wind and solar, biomass cogeneration plants provide significant job-years available year round when at operational level, without relying on big increases for construction elements. Biomass cogeneration creates long-term job opportunities, at the direct, indirect and induced levels. In solar and wind, the majority of jobs created are short-term in the construction phase, but once the construction is done, those workers are back on unemployment. The construction sector has still not rebounded to the point where construction workers have new jobs to move on to after the build. Wind and solar power job-years fall off considerably at this point.

Biomass cogeneration job-years exceed those of wind and solar by a ratio of 4:1 for all jobs (direct, indirect, induced). Within the realm of indirect impact, the supply chain jobs are a necessary component of other forest management practices (watershed restoration, fire fuels management), so there is a significant public benefit aspect to biomass as a fuel source, as well. These jobs are a crucial source of employment in rural and frontier rural areas and increase stability of local employment opportunities by spreading the cost for managing forest health across diverse sectors (forestry and energy).

In rural and frontier rural communities, the economic benefit of developing a green energy sector that capitalizes on an abundant, renewable natural resource is immense. In Sierra County, for example, the Loyaltan Power Plant alone impacts over 70 jobs directly and indirectly – this in a county of 3,000 individuals. In the Northeastern California region, there are 10 existing biomass plants; five are operational and five are dormant. Across the five closed plants, the region lost 413 on-going direct and supply chain jobs (this number does not include other indirect or induced jobs, which were significantly impacted as well). This comes out to 7 jobs per year per MWh at operational level (i.e., not dependent upon construction, etc.). The biomass energy industry provided almost 3,000 high-quality rural jobs at operational level.

From an energy standpoint, biomass energy is 100% dispatchable, which results in power grid reliability in times of emergencies. This makes the entire energy grid more stable as a whole, as biomass cogeneration makes power when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining. Biomass as a fuel source can be stockpiled and combusted to generate electricity as needed, producing more when needed and less when not. Biomass cogeneration can match demand for energy in California.

While the building of new biomass plants is discussed, it is important to not forget about the existing plants that can be ready to supply energy until the new, bigger plants are constructed. The existing, non-operational plants can be ready to operate far earlier than those projects requiring large capital investment and new construction.

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