

MARIPOSA BIOMASS PROJECT – MYTH/FACTS

(Last updated: 04/02/24)

MYTH: The proposed location at an industrial park is not zoned for a biomass facility.

- **FACT:** Biomass facilities are classified as "Public Utility Facilities" and are allowed use at this location and for this type of zoning. (Source: Mariposa Industrial Park, Bardini Planned Development Zone Application, Attachment 1)

MYTH: The industrial park zoning prohibits a furnace of any type.

- **FACT:** Prohibited uses include metal and slaughterhouse furnaces, which aren't remotely related to this bioenergy technology. The biomass facility is not a furnace. Further, Mariposa County granted a Conditional Use Permit in 2018 for a biomass facility because it is permitted in the industrial park. (Source: Mariposa Industrial Park, Bardini Planned Development Zone Application, Attachment 1 and Mariposa County CUP 2017-117)

MYTH: The biomass facility would increase local air pollution.

- **FACT:** The biomass facility produces very low emissions and would displace the open burning of piles of forest-thinning material, or long truck roundtrips down to the valley floor with wood chips. The project's environmental analysis, reviewed by the Mariposa Air Pollution Control District, showed that emissions from operations and transport were substantially lower with the biomass facility over the current status quo. One of the facility's primary goals is to curb the spread of forest fires and subsequent air pollution by reducing fuels on the ground. Forest fires are the biggest threat to air pollution and health problems in Mariposa County, and this project directly addresses that threat.

MYTH: If a biomass facility is constructed in Mariposa County, it could label our county as a permanent source of pollution AND change requirements for every vehicle owner.

- **FACT:** The biomass facility is designed to be a small and community-based plant and will not generate enough emissions to spike County emissions or impact smog check requirements. The Mariposa Air Pollution Control District has approved the project and, in doing so, has confirmed that the facility will not impact the air attainment status. This means that the limited emissions of the project will not impact the applicable National Ambient Air Quality Standards or the associated State Implementation Plan (SIP), so this project will have no impact on smog check requirements in Mariposa County.

MARIPOSA BIOMASS PROJECT – MYTH/FACTS

(Last updated: 04/02/24)

MYTH: This biomass facility is a steam turbine.

- **FACT:** Mariposa County granted a Use Permit for a bioenergy facility. These bioenergy facilities do not utilize steam turbines. The technology utilizes a closed-loop system to generate power using an organic Rankine cycle turbine generator. Because this system is completely closed-loop, there is no need for steam or cooling water used at the larger 1980s-era biomass plants. The only water utilized is for restrooms, fire protection, and dust control, meeting state and local requirements for commercial facilities.

MYTH: This biomass facility will steal the local well water.

- **FACT:** The only water utilized is for restrooms, fire protection, and dust control. Per Condition 26 of the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) (2017-117), the project water well system is required to meet all applicable local and state requirements and the approval from the County Health Department and State Water Resources Control Board.

MYTH: The project switched up its design in the 11th hour, which should require a new permit.

- **FACT:** The CUP approves the development and operation of a bioenergy facility at the project site, not a specific design or developer. The project team has met all required conditions to comply fully with the CUP.

MYTH: The biomass plant will generate too much truck traffic on Mariposa's highway.

- **FACT:** Trucks carrying wood chips are currently driving down Highway 49 to power plants in the Central Valley and Sonora. The biomass facility would only intercept existing loads while reducing round-trip length and associated traffic congestion. A traffic study estimated less than a 3% increase in local traffic, and the project will continue to follow all CalTrans and Public Works roadway requirements under the CUP.

MARIPOSA BIOMASS PROJECT – MYTH/FACTS

(Last updated: 04/02/24)

MYTH: This biomass facility will create too much noise pollution anytime it transports material from the lower to the upper part of the property.

- **FACT:** Per the CUP, the facility must abide by Noise Mitigation Measure 12d.1 to confirm that the decibel levels at the property line are below nuisance levels. In addition, the biomass facility will utilize an enclosed conveyor belt instead of vehicles to move biomass and eliminate onsite transport noise impacts.

MYTH: Producing biomass from fallen trees burns slower and creates more smoke.

- **FACT:** It is true that fallen trees burn and create smoke. This is the primary reason the Forest Service, CalFire, and the Fire Safe Councils are removing them from the community-forest interface so they can be utilized in a bioenergy facility and eliminate this fire and pollution source.

MYTH: This plan is fundamentally flawed because Mariposa County doesn't have sawmills or lumbering to provide material for the biomass plant.

- **FACT:** The project is not planning to restart the forest industry. The biomass facility will only utilize material from existing forest management projects protecting local forests and public infrastructure. Operations will work closely with the local organizations involved in forest management, including Mariposa County Resource Conservation District, to remove forest waste in high-risk fire areas. The facility is not planning to chip whole logs onsite—the material is chipped where forest management projects generate biomass piles.

MYTH: The biomass facility won't help California reach its climate change goals.

- **FACT:** The biomass facility will utilize forest residuals, reducing air pollution and fire risk while replacing fossil fuels with clean, renewable energy production. Mariposa Biomass Team has received grants from the California Energy Commission (CEC), U.S. Forest Service, CalFire, and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) specifically because the project has been demonstrated to advance climate change goals.

MARIPOSA BIOMASS PROJECT – MYTH/FACTS

(Last updated: 04/02/24)

MYTH: We should maintain the status quo with our local forest management and tree feedstock.

- **FACT:** The status quo creates emissions from open burning and forest fires. Forest-based residuals will always be generated, and California encourages the management and diversion of this fuel for forest fires to biomass facilities instead of open pile burns that create air pollution or, worse, leave trees to die and understory to build up, creating catastrophic fire risks for Mariposa.

MYTH: The project does not align with California and national climate change and fire risk reduction policy.

- **FACT:** The Fire Safe Council is seeking State funds from CalFire for forest thinning activities that protect the community. CalFire specifically favors projects with a community entity that can utilize biomass for energy production. The community will increase its competitiveness for these critical funds with the facility. In addition, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recognized this project with capital funding because of its ability to address climate resiliency and risk reduction for the community.