

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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California Department of Conservation  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

March 29, 2024

RE: California Department of Conservation application for the Biomass to Carbon Negative Biofuels Program

To Elizabeth Betancourt:

Staff and leadership from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) have worked with the Department of Conservation (DOC) since 2022 on the Forest Biomass to Carbon-Negative Biofuels Pilot Program. CAL FIRE has also been an active partner with you in drafting the state's new Wood Utilization Strategy. Considering the momentum around California's circular bioeconomy, the successes achieved to date, and existing synergies in collaboration and programmatic execution, we are pleased to support this application for funding to operationalize the DOC's Biomass to Carbon Negative Biofuels Program statewide.

This application has an additional value: the integration of feedstock aggregation through connecting the Biomass Aggregation Pilot Program (currently administered at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research) will address a persistent stumbling block to biomass utilization projects.

We anticipate supporting the Department of Conservation through ongoing program design and implementation consultation, as well as identifying opportunities for synergies in programs and projects that we administer. Further, we expect to continue our ongoing commitment of staff time to program development, grant application review and scoring, data collection and analysis from grantees, collaborative workshop development and offerings, and shared public and outreach activities. Support from CAL FIRE, including from our Wood Products & Bioenergy Team, is essential to program success because of the unique skill sets and experience we can bring. We have demonstrated success over the last 2+ years in our interagency collaboration and look forward to being part of this significant step forward for the state and all Californians.


Carbon-negative biofuels are central to achieving many of our state goals and priorities, including:

- Protecting against the risk of catastrophic wildfire through increased levels of forest management, helping to meet shared state and federal goals of treating one million acres annually by 2025;

- Building rural economies based on workforce capacity and expertise in forestry and energy production, often in partnership with federal workforce development investments;
- Offsetting fossil fuel use, in many cases providing a drop-in fuel replacement, which supports the state's climate goals through storing carbon and supporting sustainable, community-scale economic development; and,
- Creating value from waste supports the state's circular bioeconomy and management objectives for California's forested landscapes;

Communities across the state have demonstrated extremely high interest in biofuels from woody biomass waste, and the state's existing programs have not been able to meet demand. Biofuels development has been cited in numerous state policy priority documents, including as a central action in the state's 2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan, the document guiding California's climate mitigation and adaptation planning. The program of work is essential to our climate resilience strategy, and we encourage the EPA to award this funding.

Thank you,

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Anale Burlew  
Chief Deputy Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection