



Governor Gavin Newsom

**State of California**  
**Governor's Office of Planning and Research**  
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Director Sam Assefa

March 28, 2024

California Department of Conservation  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

To Elizabeth Betancourt:

On behalf of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), I am pleased to write this letter of support for the California Department of Conservation's (DOC) proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program. Since 2022, OPR has closely collaborated with DOC on the Forest Biomass to Carbon-Negative Biofuels Pilot Program, and has been an active partner in the development of the state's new Wood Utilization Strategy. In light of 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 DOC's Biomass to Carbon Negative Biofuels Program statewide.

This project is of particular interest to OPR as our state has over the last decade, been suffering from an unprecedented tree mortality crisis, catastrophic wildfires, and drought, among other adverse effects caused by climate change. As a member of the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, OPR in collaboration with DOC and other state agencies as well as the US Forest Service, is working to develop a sustainable wood products market in California. Outlined under the [Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) (Key Action 3.10), OPR has been tasked with funding five pilot projects to develop regional strategies to establish reliable access to woody feedstock through a variety of feedstock aggregation mechanisms and organizational innovations. Through the implementation of the state's Forest Sector Market Development initiative at OPR, the pilots are working to develop plans to improve feedstock supply chain logistics within each target region through the deployment of a new public entity with the authority and resources to aggregate biomass at scale and facilitate long-term feedstock contracts. Through their project deliverables, OPR's grantees are working to effectively unlock the biomass supply chain bottleneck from public and private non-industrial forest lands, particularly where opportunity exists to produce community wildfire resilience benefits.

The DOC application is taking an unprecedented step to leverage existing state investments and align climate resilience goals through the integration of OPR's Feedstock Aggregation Pilot Program into their CPRG application. This level of integration will ensure that one of the most persistent

stumbling blocks to biomass utilization projects, access to a reliable biomass supply chain, is addressed. OPR will continue to provide support to DOC through ongoing program design and implementation consultation, as well as identifying opportunities for program synergies and projects that we administer. Furthermore, we will continue to commit staff time to program development, grant application review and scoring, data collection and analysis from grantees, collaborative workshop development and offerings, and shared public outreach activities. Our support is essential to program success because of the unique skillset and experience our staff offers due to decades of experience in land-use planning and environmental management. We have demonstrated success over the last 18 months 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 climate goals and wildfire resilience priorities, including:

- Offsetting fossil fuel use – in many cases providing a drop-in fuel replacement – supports the state’s climate goals through storing carbon and supporting sustainable, community-scale economic development;
- Creating value from waste biomass supports the state’s circular bioeconomy and landscape management objectives for California’s forests and agricultural landscapes;
- Supporting California’s public health goals, including air quality, which is dramatically and negatively affected by catastrophic wildfire occurrence and agricultural waste burning;
- Protecting Californians at risk of catastrophic wildfire through increased levels of forest management, helping to meet the shared state and federal treatment goal of 1 million acres/year by 2025;
- Protecting Californians in air basins of extreme non-attainment and at risk of extreme heat through replacing fossil fuel applications and increasing carbon sequestration activities; and
- Building rural economies based on existing workforce capacity and expertise in forestry, agriculture, and energy production, by leveraging federal workforce development investments.

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 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 for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saharnaz Mirzazad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Saharnaz Mirzazad  
Executive Director, State Planning and Policy Development  
Governor’s Office of Planning and Research

