Statement on Removal and Use of Forest Biomass

Our Agreements on Forest Management in California

- In many of California's forested ecosystems, there is an urgent need to restore more natural forest structure and reintroduce beneficial fire so that forests continue to provide important ecosystem services like clean air, clean water, diverse wildlife habitats, imperiled species protection, and carbon storage while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. This urgent need is a result of a legacy of fire exclusion and suppression and has resulted in forests that are unnaturally dense, overgrown, and laden with fuel.

- An effective restoration strategy needs to utilize all tools in the toolbox: ecologically based forest thinning, prescribed fire, managed wildfire, cultural burning, working forest conservation easements, defensible space, home hardening, and emergency response.

- We support the commercial use of woody material that has been removed from forests as part of a science-based restoration program where the end goal is to increase forest health and resilience, while meeting the needs of species and ecosystems.

We support the following principles regarding the removal and use of forest biomass:

- Commercial uses of forest biomass, through the sale of value-added wood products and/or energy, are important options to make use of forest material that must be removed. The expansion and environmental regulation of forest biomass markets can provide for the disposal of excess forest biomass and help avoid overtaxing California's solid waste management system. This use of biomass also will reduce the need for open pile burning and assist in the expansion of ecologically beneficial prescribed fire.

- Bioenergy facilities utilizing forest biomass waste include a range of different technologies and energy production scales, ranging from small scale bioenergy for heat (e.g., thermal-only installations), to cogenerating community scale biomass (1-5MW), to medium scale facilities (5-20MW), to larger scale facilities (> 20MW) co-located with wood processing and other light industrial facilities that can make use of waste heat and generated energy.

- The removal of forest biomass for bioenergy purposes should follow the guidelines below to ensure environmental standards are being met:
    - The demand for power generation or value-added wood products at any facility should never drive removal of biomass from the forest.

    - Biomass facilities should be sized according to the availability of fuel in the surrounding landscape and an ecologically appropriate removal rate, in accordance with restoration plans. To mitigate trucking and transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions, it is desirable that supply areas be in relatively close proximity to the facility.

    - The availability of fuel should be determined by landscape-level ecological restoration plans that provide for the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the target landscape.

    - Any biomass facility should utilize woody biomass at an annual rate and for a period of time that is ecologically appropriate for the surrounding forested landscape. In order to attract private investment and encourage public private partnerships, supply agreements should be guaranteed across all lands and among all land restoration partners for a minimum of 10-20 years. These two conditions should be harmonized when developing commercial uses for forest biomass.

- Our groups are dedicated to ensuring clean air and clean water for all. With this goal central to our organizations, we believe that siting biomass facilities in California Clean Air Act non-compliant air basins should be avoided to reduce pollution burdens on disadvantaged communities, unless those facilities can be shown to reduce emissions from other sources of burning. Facilities should generally be located in air quality basins in compliance with federal and state standards and should incorporate emissions control technologies to ensure they remain within state, federal, or tribal standards. This precludes the siting and building of additional biomass facilities in non-compliant air basins, like the Central Valley, unless a net reduction in emissions can be achieved.

- Our groups recognize that while biomass energy facilities emit carbon and criteria pollutants, the role of these facilities in enabling forest restoration over time will reduce the greenhouse gas emission impacts of wildfire. This environmental benefit,

along with a host of other economic and social benefits, warrants continued support via public policy and public investments.

- Marketing and branding approaches for restoration byproducts such as energy, pellets, bio briquettes, biochar, fire resistant building materials, etc., that include triple bottom line impact statements and reinvest a portion of proceeds for charitable purposes aligning with long term restoration and maintenance of fire resilient landscapes is an additional value-added economic stacking tool that will help to reduce the taxpayer burden in the long run.

- Facilities and uses should be sited either within or as close as possible or practicable to forested communities to capture economic and social benefits in the communities of origin of the biomass materials. Previously used mill sites may be ideal in many locations and can leverage federal funding for clean-up.

Glossary

Forest biomass: Woody material derived from forest management and tree removal. Generally, biomass consists of brush, small trees, branches, and tree tops that have little to no commercial value.

Managed fire: Fire ignited by an unplanned ignition, e.g., lightning, managed for ecological and social benefits.