

SIERRA COUNTY

Department of Public Works and Transportation

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Tim H. Beals
Director

February 28, 2018

The Honorable Nury Martinez, Chairwoman
Energy, Climate Change & Environmental Justice Committee
City Hall, Room 470
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: CF#18-0133 – approval of Southern California Public Power Authority renewable power contract with ARP-Loyalton Cogen LLC

Dear Councilmember Martinez:

On behalf of Sierra County, California, I want to provide support for the LADWP power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Southern California Public Power Authority (SCPPA) for biomass power to be supplied by ARP-Loyalton Cogen LLC commencing this spring. The Loyalton plant and what it represents to Sierra County is one of the highest priorities of the Board of Supervisors and the approval of this agreement furthers its successful operation.

The Sierra County and Tahoe Basin regions surrounding the Loyalton facility are in the headwaters—or upper watersheds—of the Sierra Nevada, and supply most of the water used by California’s farms and cities. These areas are part of the state’s natural water infrastructure—and their health is at risk. A combination of legislated changes to forest and fire management practices as well as climate changes in the past 20 years have resulted in national forests and some private timberland that have become overly dense and prone to much more extreme wildfires. The recent drought in the western US has resulted in the loss of more than 129 million trees. This biomass has been a large source of fuel contributing to the massive and increasing number of fires across the state of California.

Large fires raise numerous challenges for water management—they can reduce water quality and reservoir storage capacity, while increasing risks of flooding and landslides. The state, including Los Angeles, needs to support programs that restore and ensure future forest health. A white paper recently released by the non-partisan Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) (www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1016JM4R.pdf) describes the threats and potential responses to this wildfire danger. One conclusion from this report that support for lumber mills and biomass generation plants in proximity to forests is warranted. To argue that the mulch market can absorb the

volumes of dead and dying trees, or that these trees are suitable for lumber is inaccurate. Most, if not all of the dead trees, have little commercial value because of damage caused by bark beetles. Furthermore, all of the biomass power plant fuel is sourced from tops and limbs from timber production and this source of fuel has no other commercial value and otherwise remains in the forest as a highly combustible material.

Biomass facilities like the Loyalton Cogen plant are an integral part of the long-term protection of the headwaters forests in the Sierra. These watersheds have been severely impacted by vast forest fires over the past decade and the Loyalton plant ensures that hundreds of thousands of tons of residual biomass can be removed from the national forests under careful supervision of the US Forest Service, private timberland owners, and CALFire for years to come.

One final observation is important to establish why this is so important. During 2017, California suffered the single most damaging wildfires in its history. Here are the facts and the following numbers occurred in a year where we experienced historical rainfall and a passing presumption that wild fire damage and drought were no longer risks:

- 9,133 fires
- 1,381,405 acres burned
- \$13 billion of damages and firefighting costs
- 10,800 structures destroyed
- 46 deaths
- 230,000 persons evacuated

Biomass power plants in California remove more than 6,000,000 tons of dangerous fuels, provide employment for thousands of skilled individuals in our rural communities, and deliver renewable energy 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We respectfully ask for your support of the Loyalton contract with LADWP at this time and if you or any member of the committee have any questions pertaining to the importance of the Loyalton plant and/or the County's active support for it, please call me directly at anytime at 530-289-3201 or by email at tbeals@sierracounty.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Tim H. Beals

County Director of Transportation and Planning