Biomass project gathers steam

House committee OKs \$500,000 for initiative

By Loryll Nicolaisen Journal Staff Writer

Placer County has received a big boost in its hopes to establish a program that could reduce the risk of wildfires and also generate energy.

The House Appropriations Committee approved last week \$500,000 in federal funding for the county's biomass pilot project, the Placer County Board of Supervisors announced Friday in a press release.

The idea behind the biomass project is to remove woody debris such as dead trees and downed limbs from the forest and turn it into renewable energy, reducing the risk of wildfires in the process, said Supervisor Jim Holmes, vice chairman of the board.

"The primary emphasis is going to be removing all that biomass out of the forest," Holmes said Friday. "Our ultimate goal is to build a biomass

See Biomass

Biomass:

Final action by the House expected this fall

plant in that area."

Holmes said that he and Bruce Kranz, board of supervisors chairman, have worked to pursue the potential for biomass for the past couple of years.

"It's just a good program," Holmes said. "There's so many benefits ... It's tragic that the (Angora) fire happened, but the good thing is that we're getting people's attention"

Kranz said in the press release that he appreciates the dedication to the biomass program shown by U.S. Rep. John Doolittle, R-Roseville.

"The congressman has consistently supported Placer County by recognizing the threat we face from catastrophic wildfire,"







Jim Holme



Bruce Kro

Kranz said. "Last year, we saw first hand the impacts from the Ralston fire as we toured the area together. Congressman Doolittle and I just toured the Angora fire. The congressman has been there for us through these fires and now coming through with \$500,000 for our program demonstrates his commitment to his district."

Wood waste can be burned in a special furnace with emission controls that capture the heat for energy, such as steam, to power a turbine, according to the press release.

Biomass can also be allowed to ferment under controlled conditions in order to generate methane gas, which is a clean burning fuel.

Final action is not likely to occur until later this year, and Holmes said he's confident Placer County would get its money.

"We're pretty positive that it will pass through the entire house in the fall," he said.

The Journal's Loryll Nicolaisen can be reached at lorylln@goldcountrymedia.com, or comment online at auburnjournal.com.

Placer County Board of Supervisors

When: 2 p.m. Monday and again at 9 a.m. Tuesday

Where: Lodge pole room of the North Tahoe Conference Center, 8318 North Loke Boulevard, Kings Beach

Call: (530) 889-4010 for more informa-