

Carbon and Forests: Let's get to work

AB 590 and AB 1345
Assemblyman Brian Dahle

Why thin forests?

- Century of fire exclusion in Sierra Nevada is coming back to bite us.
- Heavy fuel loading and extreme tree densities mean that fires, when they escape control, burn hotter and more destructively.
- Bad for habitat, water quality, public safety, the public treasury, and ...

Big fires make forests a carbon source

- CO₂ emissions from high-intensity fires are enormous.
- Rim Fire emissions = 11.3 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, according to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. That is equivalent to roughly 10% of California's annual vehicle trips (118 million tons in 2012).
- As size and intensity grow, so do emissions.
- Forests, instead of a carbon sink, are becoming a GHG source.

AB 590

- “There is hereby created the Biomass State Cost Share Account within the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund established pursuant to Section 16428.8. Moneys in the amount of _____ dollars (\$_____) shall be transferred annually from the fund to the account. Moneys in the account, upon appropriation, shall be available for expenditure by the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission for the purposes of ***maintaining the current level of biomass power generation in the state and revitalizing currently idle facilities in strategically located regions.***”

The point

- “By diverting biomass residues away from open burning, landfill burial, and accumulation in forests, the state benefits from reduced criteria air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, landfill capacity use, forest and watershed improvement, rural employment and economic development, and energy diversity and security. ***These services have been provided without compensation in the past, as the electricity market was able to fully underwrite the cost.***”

We are free-market people, but ...

- Solar power installations enjoy federal tax credits, local property tax exemptions (extended last year through 2025), utility rebates, etc.
- Large incentives within some sectors of renewable power industry distort financial picture, drive biomass plants out of business.

AB 1345: Count fire emissions

- “This bill would require the state board, in consultation with the department, no later than January 1, 2017, to estimate the annual greenhouse gas emissions associated with wildfires in California between the years 1990 and 2015, inclusive. The bill would require the state board to develop, no later than January 1, 2017, an emissions baseline for wildfires by calculating the average of the annual greenhouse gas emissions associated with wildfires between the years 1990 and 2015, inclusive. The bill would require the state board and the department to annually approximate, no later than July 1, 2017, and every year thereafter, the greenhouse gas emissions associated with wildfires during the prior calendar year.”

AB 1345: Invest cap-and-trade funds

- “This bill, beginning with the 2016–17 fiscal year, would continuously appropriate \$100,000,000 to the department from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for specified activities that have the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by preventing the incidence of and reducing the intensity of catastrophic wildfires.”

AB 1345: Invest cap-and-trade funds

- *“(A) Vegetation management and brush clearance.*
- *(B) Biomass energy incentives.*
- *(C) Incentives for private actions to reduce the risk or intensity of wildfires or improve the resiliency of those lands.*
- *(D) Reforestation of lands that have previously been burned in a catastrophic wildfire.”*

AB 1345: Set a goal

- “This bill would require the department, no later than July 1, 2017, after one or more specified public workshops, to develop and begin implementation of strategies to reduce by 2035 the preceding 5-year average of greenhouse gas emissions associated with wildfires by 20 percent below the greenhouse gas emissions baseline described above.”
- All of the above, plus:
- “(5) Agreements between the federal government and the department to undertake identified strategies.”

Challenges

- Everybody wants their cut of cap-and-trade dollars.
- Division within green community.
- Urban California doesn't care.

Opportunities

- Growing sense of urgency.
- Growing coalition – Nature Conservancy, ACWA, Sierra Nevada Conservancy.
- Seen the news the past few summers? Just wait.

Questions? Comments?

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