

To: Citizen Advisory Committee
Redwood Coast Energy Authority

Submitted by Nancy Ihara

Public Comment. Item #6, Non-Agenda Item.

Many of us have seen the dramatic photos from India showing the decrease in pollution in the major cities of Mumbai, New Delhi, and Kolkata as a result of Covid 19 shelter-in-place rules. These images for all of us reinforce the idea that the industries and easy transportation on which we depend for our 1st world existence often have significant detrimental impacts. How we change or, in some cases do without, these industries so as not to experience these environmental impacts is a major challenge.

RCEA, too, is confronted by these challenges. RCEA is dependent on, pays for, electric energy from biomass plants which produce annually over 400 thousand metric tons of CO₂, a major greenhouse gas, and over a ton of fine particulates each week. Wendy Ring, I believe, has sent the RCEA Board of Directors information on recent new findings regarding the relation between these pm_{2.5} particulates and Covid 19. Hopefully the CAC will review this document.

In the fall when the Citizens' Advisory Committee was asked to determine what constituted clean energy, which RCEA was committed to rely on 100% by 2025, it concluded that it could not, that the word "clean" was too subjective. These findings are in the RePower Humboldt CAPE. However, it is my understanding that this version of the CAPE can be changed if the RCEA Board, ideally with CAC input, determines that it is advisable to do so. I urge the CAC once again to consider what constitutes "clean" energy, especially as new findings are made concerning the impact of the fine particulates which the biomass plants emit on the health of the residents of Humboldt County, especially in regard to Covid 19..

The designation by the California State Renewable Portfolio Standard that biomass is an acceptable renewable energy source does not take into account the 50, 70 or even 100 years that it takes for the greenhouse gases it emits to be sequestered. I hope that in addition to revisiting the idea of what it means to be a "clean" source of energy that the CAC and the RCEA Board in the near future will look at the inadequacies of the Portfolio Standard in regards to biomass as well. We do not experience the level of pollution the cities cited above but the environmental impact of the biomass plants is not negligible. If the Redwood Coast Energy Authority is to do its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst effects of climate change transitioning away from significant sources of GHG's, such as biomass, needs to happen.