

Bill to boost biomass moves forward in Legislature with amendments

Assemblymembers on Monday amended a bill aimed at using biomass products to prevent negative impacts from pile burning and wildfires.

BY: **JULIANN VENTURA** | 06/23/2025 10:02 PM EDT



Fog lies on the forests of the Taunus region near Frankfurt, Germany, on Dec. 25, 2024. | Michael Probs/AP

SACRAMENTO, California — Assemblymembers on Monday amended a bill to boost the use of agricultural and forest biomass by incorporating it in California's long-range climate policies.

What happened: The Assembly Natural Resources Committee approved state Sen. Anna Caballero's [SB 88](#) on a party-line vote after accepting amendments to delay the

requirements and have state regulators assess the life-cycle emissions from using biomass.

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The bill would require the California Air Resources Board to include and incentivize the biomass products industry in its next scoping plan, which outlines California's strategy to achieve its climate goals. The most recent plan was finalized in 2022 and is typically updated every five years.

The amendments would require CARB to publish an assessment of life-cycle emissions from alternative uses of forest and agricultural biomass residues instead of developing a quantification method, and would delay the effective date from 2028 to 2029 so that CARB would have more time to "strategize supporting beneficial carbon removal products."

Context: Agricultural groups and local air quality officials argued that using biomass to create products like biochar — a charcoal-like substance — can strengthen energy reliability, create new industries and products, and support workforce development in "underinvested areas" of the state.

Environmental groups argued that it could increase air pollution through combusting and gasifying woody materials.

Alberto Ayala, the air pollution control officer and the executive director of the Sacramento Air Quality Management District, which is co-sponsoring the bill, said the bill would promote "Biomass Energy 2.0," which he said would be different from "traditional biomass energy plants" because they would be "smaller-scale, more localized conversion facilities that create little excess pollution."

"If we don't burn, we're helping improve air quality," Ayala said. "If we don't burn biomass and utilize it, we can increase economic development, especially in rural

California allowing farmers to be a part of the state's clean energy transition.”

Center for Biological Diversity scientist Shaye Wolf argued the proponents “incorrectly assume that woody biomass energy and products are beneficial.”

“Making these woody biomass products worsens the climate crisis, harms public health, often in environmental justice communities, industrializes and depletes our carbon storing forests and burdens taxpayers because these products are so expensive,” Wolf said. She added that the processes used to make the products, like combustion, gasification and pyrolysis, emit a significant amount of carbon dioxide and air pollution.

What's next: The bill heads to the Senate Appropriations Committee.