

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Friday, June 30th

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Groups Call on California Officials to Axe the GSNR Wood Pellet Project

More than 100 groups from across California and beyond submitted [comments](#) today opposing plans to construct a massive wood pellet project in the central Sierra and the Modoc Plateau. The wood pellets would be shipped through the Port of Stockton to countries like Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands to be burned in power plants.

The groups state that the project “will irrevocably harm our climate, communities, and forests,” and will increase air pollution, particularly around the wood pellet mills and the Port of Stockton, a community which already has some of the highest pollution burdens in the state. They noted that fires and explosions have repeatedly plagued wood pellet storage piles at port facilities in other parts of the country and pose serious risks to host communities.

“I simply want to express my opposition to this project. It is unacceptable that our environmental justice community has been overlooked during the scoping process simply under the pretense of achieving ‘efficiency,’” stated Gloria Alonso Cruz, environmental justice advocacy coordinator with Little Manila Rising in Stockton. “This is particularly critical due to the air pollution threats this project poses, given the already existing air pollution conditions impacting Stockton on a daily basis.”

“Increased fire risks associated with stockpiled pellets directly puts Stockton residents at risk,” said Stockton resident Mary Elizabeth, conservation chair of the Delta-Sierra Group of the Sierra Club. “The proposed project will erase the Port’s positive actions and further degrade our air with increased pollutant emissions from more truck, rail and marine trips.”

Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) [proposes](#) to build two of the country's largest wood pellet mills in Tuolumne and Lassen Counties. These facilities would produce a combined million metric tons of wood pellets each year, similar to the Enviva pellet mills that are devastating the Southeastern US. The pellets would be shipped by rail or truck to the Port of Stockton, and exported overseas to countries in Asia, Latin America and Europe to be burned in converted coal plants. Much of the wood will be logged from national forests within a 100-mile radius of each pellet mill, including some of California’s most iconic landscapes.

This spring, residents of Richmond rebuffed GSNR’s proposal to ship wood pellets through the Levin marine terminal in Richmond on San Francisco Bay. GSNR removed that site from

consideration after residents raised concerns to the Richmond City Council about the project's health and safety risks to the surrounding community.

"Port communities like Richmond and Stockton are already overburdened with severe health risks from toxic air pollution," said Janet Scoll Johnson, co-coordinator at Sunflower Alliance. "That's why Richmond said 'no' to wood pellet handling and storage at our port. We need sustainable economic development that will preserve the quality of the environment for future generations, not a dirty wood pellet scheme."

Rebuffing GSNR's claims about the project's climate benefits, the groups note that "[w]ood pellets are a highly carbon-intensive, polluting, expensive, and inefficient energy source that have no place in a clean energy future." Biomass power plants emit more CO₂ than coal plants, per megawatt hour. Numerous studies show that it takes decades to a century or more for cut forests to re-sequester the amount of carbon emitted from logging and burning woody biomass for energy, well past the timeframe where climate scientists agree we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to their climate impacts, wood pellet manufacturing facilities emit large quantities of air pollution that harms public health, including fine particulates (PM_{2.5}), carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic chemicals, and hazardous air pollutants such as acetaldehyde, formaldehyde, and methanol.

Many rural California grassroots organizations are critical of the wood pellet export proposal. "Our rural communities need sustainable jobs in watershed restoration and climate resiliency, not another biomass boom and bust that creates wealth only for corporate interests," said Nick Joslin, Forest and Watershed Watch Program Manager with the Northern California organization Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center.

California groups were joined by groups from Japan and other countries where the wood pellets would likely be destined.

"We strongly oppose the GSNR project since it will worsen the climate and biodiversity crisis," said Kanna Mitsuta, executive director of Friends of the Earth Japan. "It is utterly unacceptable to turn more forests into wood pellets, burn pellets under the guise of being "carbon neutral" and help extend the lifetime of coal power plants by providing wood pellets."

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For more information, see:

[California's Forests Targeted as Feedstock for Global Wood Bioenergy Industry](#) (Biofuelwatch)

[California Scheming: Rural county officials diving into the wood pellet business](#) (PFPI)

Click [here](#) to read the letter