

Leave No Chip Unturned... It's Electric Power!

June 8, 2024



You're quietly driving along 199 north of Gasquet, eyes focused on the road and suddenly, in what was previously you recall a large pull off area from the Highway, observe a massive wood chip pile, neatly nestled near the incline of the canyon mountain. Wow! What's going on with that?

In the wake of the Smith River Complex fires, last year a major focus of the gargantuan cleanup was to ensure Highway 199 was safe for motorists to travel on. As a result, fire-weakened trees were felled. Trees marked as non-marketable or not suitable for firewood were chipped and used for erosion control in strategic locations along the corridor. A substantial amount of chips remained (7,600 tons of wood chips).

On leaving no chip unturned, and through meticulous planning and collaborative efforts, the disposal and energy conversion of these wood chips has been successfully accomplished.

BioMass One, a concentration power plant, played an essential role on this endeavor utilizing commercial forest product permits to burn the chips locally. This effort mitigated the fire hazard of spontaneous combustion while disposing of potentially pathogen-infected material in an environmentally friendly matter. The approximate 160,000 lbs of wood chips generated some 3,000 megawatt hours of electricity capable of powering 1800 average size American homes for a period of two months.

The coordination of the massive operation was facilitated by Cal Trans, in conjunction with the US Forest Service, BioMass One, Bettendorf and Tidewater trucking contractors.

The partners worked together to transport the chips to BioMass, in White City.

A total of 53 free use chip permits were issued to general public and Tribal members, aiding in the removal of an estimated 116 green tons of material l

Cal Trans will handle the small chip pile that remains to ensure public safety and minimize disruption of operations at the curtain burner, scheduled over the next two months.

Leave no chip unturned.