

## The Association of Oregon Counties Support SB 1578-5/-6

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) supports SB 1578, as amended, to make biomass an eligible green energy technology to meet the state's 1.5 percent investment requirement for new public buildings and major renovations and to adjust the 1.5 percent reserve requirements for projects where renewable investments are not practical.

AOC believes including biomass in the 1.5 percent requirement has many benefits including:

- Increased energy independence for Oregon;
- Lowering Oregon's carbon footprint and
- Stimulating new economic investment and green job opportunities, especially in rural areas.

This is a tested and economical technology that is used in over 20 community-scale biomass thermal energy projects scattered across 10 Oregon Counties providing space heat and hot water to schools, hospitals, airports and visitor centers in small communities. These projects provide numerous community benefits, including:

- Saving public agencies money on heating fuel purchase costs that can be used for teachers or other public service priorities;
- Keeping dollars expended on heating fuel local by re-circulating them in communities and creating jobs in woody biomass harvesting, processing, and delivery;
- Facilitating thinning of overly dense forest stands by creating market demand for small trees and biomass;
- Avoiding the smoke and cost of pile burning thousands of tons of thinning slash from forest restoration activities;
- Slashing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by thousands of tons by switching use from fossil fuels; and
- Increasing the overall energy independence of local forest communities.

Including woody biomass in the eligible 1.5 percent green energy technologies will encourage more wide spread adoption of biomass thermal energy projects. Public agencies will be more likely to invest in an additional biomass energy project. This provides an opportunity to install renewable energy technology at the best time: when a building is first being constructed or during a major renovation.

AOC also supports the -6 amendments. There are occasions when a new project is not suitable for renewable energy. Current law requires that funds be held in reserve until the next project is developed. Unfortunately, some communities may not have a new project for many years. This amendment gives the local community the right to appeal to ODOE for a waiver after five years. We strongly support this amendment, when budgets are tight in many counties it would be unfortunate to have money held in reserve for a project that may not be built for years to come.

AOC strongly supports SB 1578 and its amendments. For more information on AOC's position please contact policy manager, Mark Nystrom ([mnystrom@aocweb.org](mailto:mnystrom@aocweb.org)/503-585-8351)