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## My Turn: Woody waste in Placer: Chip, box and ship — for free

By Bruce Kranz  
October 11, 2007

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I am pleased to report that there has been some valuable progress in citizens, homeowners and community groups in Placer County in removing fire-risky accumulations of woody debris in our backyards and wooded lots.

I have focused particularly upon the Tahoe area in my district. In addition to the long-standing provision of chippers on site, this last year the county biomass program — and cooperating agencies have made available upon request (530-546-2212) some 80 large biomass boxes — 20, 30-yard Dumpsters from the North Tahoe Fire Protection District. The district's inspection of defensible space provides guidance on what to cut and provides permits for trees over six inches. Chipping, inspection and boxes are free. After the snow melts the county will consider providing chipping and haul away in one economical step.

It is vital to the health of humans, forests, wildlife and water clarity to thin forests of dead, dying, diseased or dense trees, weeds and brush. The Angora Fire recently destroyed 254 homes. Shortly thereafter the Washoe Fire threatened the Tahoe Basin yet again. The critical need to remove woody fuels from around our homes and businesses is now undeniable.

I am working on a number of regulatory burdens at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and Placer County. While we wait for bureaucratic fixes, we have a lot to do. Over the last century a dangerously high level of woody material has grown up threatening our lives, property and environment. There was a time we would just burn it, but not anymore. "It is always better to take away materials that would otherwise be burned," says Tom Christofk of the Placer County Air Pollution Control District.

The Tahoe Basin Biomass Removal Program delivers large boxes to homeowner locations throughout the Tahoe Basin. Rob Weston of the Skywood Homeowners Association says, our "members have successfully removed forest fuels from several homeowners lots thanks to this program."

Filled boxes are delivered to a county facility at Cabin Creek for chipping or grinding. From Cabin Creek, the Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal then hauls the chips to a biomass facility in Loyalton to be converted into clean energy. Next season we hope to chip on site and deliver the chips directly to Loyalton.

The county and cooperating agencies are subsidizing a portion of the transportation costs.

We are on the way to creating clean energy, reducing air and water pollution and preventing catastrophic wildfires. Our success — and we have along way to go — is due to the support and cooperation of my colleagues on the Placer Board of Supervisors and the many cooperating agencies — Nevada Fire Safe Council, North Tahoe Fire Protection District, U.S. Forest Service, California State Parks, Placer County Air Pollution Control District and others. For additional information contact the Placer County Biomass Project office at (530) 889-4651.

*Bruce Kranz is the District 5 Placer County supervisor.*

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