



## Forest Biomass Transport Incentive Program Overview and Guidance

In California as across much of the West, increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration faces two key challenges. First, most products resulting from treatments are largely non-merchantable; and second, where markets exist for that material, the economic haul distance is short (typically less than 30 miles one way of the end user), greatly restricting the land base where projects are affordable to the landowner.

Through the [My Sierra Woods](#) (MSW) program in northern California, the [American Forest Foundation](#) (AFF) seeks to address these barriers by launching the Forest Biomass Transportation Incentive (FBTI) – a financial incentive that will reimburse private landowners for a portion of their out-of-pocket expense in conducting needed fuels reduction work. Through the FBTI, AFF seeks to increase the scope and scale of cross-jurisdictional forest restoration projects that are economically feasible to private landowners. In so doing, AFF hopes to reduce the likelihood of unnaturally large and severe wildfires, thus protecting working forests, rural communities, and critical upland watersheds, while improving carbon storage.

### The FBTI Process: Step-by-Step

- A Registered Professional Forester (RPF), working on behalf of a landowner, secures appropriate CEQA compliance documentation from CAL FIRE for fuels reduction work.
- The RPF negotiates a fuel purchase agreement from a BioRAM facility within the nine-county project area (Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Butte, Plumas, Yuba, Sierra, Nevada and Placer).
- The RPF completes and submits a FBTI program application on behalf of the landowner. Note that at this juncture the landowner may designate a fiscal agent (RPF, LTO, 3<sup>rd</sup> Party) to direct subsequent reimbursements.
- AFF will approve or deny the application and notify the RPF. If denied, the cause will be identified and if remediable the RPF/landowner will be invited to re-apply.
- As work is on-going or at the completion of a fuels-reduction project, RPF completes and submits a request for reimbursement with required documentation.
- AFF reviews and confirms accuracy and completeness of request and issues payment according to the schedule noted below.
- When the project is complete, RPF completes and submits the certificate of project completion.
- CAL FIRE is notified of project completion for inspection, if required.

### Program Eligibility

While both non-industrial and industrial private forest landowners are eligible to participate in the FBTI, the program is deliberately weighted to incentivize appropriate active forest management on non-industrial, forest lands.

- Only 20% of the total reimbursements made in a given calendar year may be allocated to industrial ownerships and then only in cases where the material is sourced from projects that complement risk reduction and/or forest restoration activities on adjoining non-industrial parcels.
- Eligibility is restricted to only those projects that occur in designated Tier 1 or Tier 2

- High Hazard Zones, from recent fire footprints, or utilize exemptions noted as qualifying as High Hazard, as defined by CAL FIRE.
- Material may be sourced from projects any distance from a BioRAM plant and within the nine-county project area (Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Butte, Yuba, Plumas, Nevada, Sierra, and Placer).

#### BioRAM Facilities

The FBTI reimburses private landowners for a portion of the cost to transport material from risk reduction/forest restoration projects to designated biomass plants.

- Material may be transported to any designated BioRAM I or II facility with a valid power purchase agreement; However, reimbursement will be valued only to the **nearest** BioRAM facility from the project area.

#### Registered Professional Foresters

RPFs are critical to the near and long-term success of the FBTI program and as such are responsible for 1) understanding and agreeing to comply with the rules and protocols of the program, and 2) representing landowner information truthfully and accurately on all program documents.

- The FBTI program does not assume any oversight of silvicultural prescriptions. However, projects must promote stand heterogeneity.
- RPFs will be required to document pre and post treatment data for GHG reduction reporting to CAL FIRE.

#### CEQA Compliance

Only projects that have demonstrated CEQA compliance are eligible to participate.

- RPFs are solely responsible for ensuring and documenting project CEQA compliance.
- Valid and current THP, NTMP, or Exemption permit numbers issued by CAL FIRE must be documented.
- Reimbursements under the FBTI will **not** be made if the request for reimbursement occurs after CEQA expiration has occurred.
- Applications to participate in the program may be rejected if project CEQA documentation is set to expire within 45 days of project application.

#### Reimbursement

The FBTI is meant to act as an incentive to private landowners to undertake risk reduction/forest restoration projects that otherwise may be uneconomical. The FBTI is not intended to enable landowners to significantly profit from those projects.

- Reimbursement is based on bone dry tons and miles traveled to **nearest** BioRAM plant, using the rate table contained on the FBTI webpage.
- RPFs must document haul route and provide justification for any exceptional circumstances for using anything other than the most direct route. AFF may decline payment if justification is missing or erroneous.
- Landowners, acting through their RPF, may request reimbursements up to two times per month. Reimbursement requests need to be made formally through submission of the FBTI Payment Request form to AFF.
- AFF guarantees reimbursement payment within 20 days of receipt of correctly submitted FBTI Payment Request forms.

#### Oversight

AFF has a duty to ensure program accountability and transparency.

- AFF will convene a FBTI Steering Committee to review implementation and make course corrections to ensure that the FBTI is fully and effectively subscribed over the implementation period.
  - The Steering Committee will be comprised of forestry stakeholders and include

one AFF staff member alongside one representative from each of the following groups:

- conservation NGOs,
  - RPFs,
  - local government/fire safe councils,
  - NIPF landowner associations,
  - state regulatory agencies,
  - biomass plants, and
  - forest-products associations.
- AFF may, at its sole discretion, conduct randomized audits of program participants to ensure program integrity. By willingly participating in the FBTI program, landowners and their designated RPFs agree to provide such information as may be necessary to evaluate that integrity.
  - Program rules and protocols may change to improve project performance based on recommendations of the Steering Committee. All changes will be documented on the My Sierra Woods website.

**Questions?** Contact Sarah Hendrix, California Tree Farm Coordinator, My Sierra Woods: [sarah@mysierrawoods.org](mailto:sarah@mysierrawoods.org).

Additional information regarding the FBTI program can also be found on the My Sierra Woods website: [www.mysierrawoods.org/fbti](http://www.mysierrawoods.org/fbti)



*“My Sierra Woods – Capturing Carbon on California's Family Forest Lands” project is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing GHG emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment— particularly in disadvantaged communities.*

*The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution. California Climate Investments projects include affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, more sustainable agriculture, recycling, and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are located within and benefiting residents of disadvantaged communities, low income communities, and low-income households across California.*

*For more information, visit the California Climate Investments website at: [www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov](http://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov).*