



Woodwaste that Biomass One can turn into energy. (Photo by Biomass One.)

Biomass survey coming this summer

BY TOM CARSTENS

By now you're probably aware of efforts underway to determine other ways, besides open burning, to dispose of our wood waste and slash in the Applegate. Some residents have indicated a strong interest in reducing the number of smoky days we experience in our valley. There is a useful alternative: conversion to electricity! All over the country, there are many locations where biomass waste is combusted efficiently to produce steam to turn turbines that power electrical generators. When burned in a biomass electrical generation plant, there is better than a 500-to-1 reduction in smoke emissions.

Biomass One has operated a 25-megawatt facility in White City since the 1980s. This plant produces enough energy to power around 20,000 homes, converting about 355,000 tons of waste annually. In February, the Rough and Ready Mill in Cave Junction started its own biomass electrical generation facility for the Illinois Valley. About half of the biomass is being donated by their neighbors. Woody biomass is already in use as fuel at more than 50 industrial sites across Oregon.

Someday this type of facility might be viable for our own valley. In the meantime, the Applegate Biomass Study Group (ABSG) would like to know if any of you would be interested in hauling some or all of your slash to a drop-off point instead of burning it. Biomass One has indicated that, if there's enough interest, they would haul it away from a common drop-off point in the Applegate.

ABSG has made arrangements with Southern Oregon University to conduct a survey of valley residents to determine the degree to which we'd be willing to change the way we dispose of our wood waste. About 700 Applegate Valley residences will be selected randomly to receive the mail-in survey form. This form will be quick and easy to fill out. The forms will be mailed this summer and results of the survey published in the fall. Responses will be completely confidential. We're hoping that, if you happen to receive a survey, you'll take a few minutes to fill it out and mail it back to SOU in a prepaid envelope. How you feel about this is important to ensure that any future money is well spent.

I'll provide you with more details of this project as we get going. Thanks!

Tom Carstens • 541-846-1025

Solar homes and businesses wanted for tour

BY TOM CARSTENS

For several years, the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) has promoted a nationwide series of solar tours featuring solar-powered homes and businesses. The idea is to spur interest and to educate folks in this up-and-coming energy market. Oregon Solar sponsors this tour for our state. The tour is conducted in October of every year. The city of Ashland has held a successful tour for several years now. Last year, Shady Cove, Phoenix, Talent, and upper Rogue residents also had their own tours.

Since we have quite a few solar homes and businesses in the Applegate Valley now, the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation (GACDC) would like to sponsor a similar tour in the Applegate Valley. Many of you already have shown an interest in learning more about this.

Here's the idea: On one Saturday next October, we'll have an open-house type tour that will feature several of the solar systems in the valley. Owners will make themselves available for a few hours to explain their systems, tax and rebate incentives, and how they got started. A map showing the locations of volunteer participants will be prepared. Some of us participated in a similar tour a couple of years ago, which generated a lot of interest and some new solar homes.

If you're a solar system owner and would like to help explain your setup to others thinking of doing the same thing, I'd like to hear from you. Please give me a call so I can start coordinating with you. Those of us who have solar understand how great it works—let's spread the word about small electric bills!

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