

BIOCHAR TODAY

Proposed Biochar Plant Receives Unanimous Approval in Lake County

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The Lake County Planning Commission in California approved a biochar plant proposed by Scott's Valley Energy Company, for converting woodchips into syngas for power. Despite tribal and environmental support, residents raised concerns about fire risks, truck traffic, and site suitability. A CEQA review and public comment period continue.



The Lake County Planning Commission has approved a permit for a biochar processing plant in Upper Lake, following months of public hearings and debates. The project, led by Scotts Valley Energy Corporation in partnership with the Habematolel Pomo Tribal Nation, aims to convert forest woodchips into syngas to power generators. Despite concerns

raised by local residents, the permit was granted unanimously (4-0) on December 12, with one commissioner absent.

The plant will be built on county-leased land along East State Highway 20, with plans to restore the site to its natural watershed state after a 15-year lease. Commissioner Barry Brown emphasized the historical use of biochar by tribal communities and addressed environmental concerns. "The application has demonstrated that these issues will be mitigated," he said.

Some residents voiced strong opposition, citing safety and environmental risks. Lori Larson and Barbara Morris raised concerns about potential fire hazards, air pollution, and increased truck traffic, questioning the suitability of the plant's location near agricultural land and a preschool. Others, like Julia Carrera, supported the tribe's economic initiative but argued the location was inappropriate.

Doug Gearhart, Lake County's air pollution control officer, noted that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process is ongoing. Additional public comment will be invited once detailed air quality assessments are completed.

Proponents, including Scotts Valley Energy representatives, maintain the gasification process is environmentally sound, with no harmful emissions. Residents have a seven-day window to appeal the decision.