

Tyler Crawford

### Calaveras Grown

Our heavily forested county offers unparalleled beauty that people travel hundreds of miles to see. I take pride in both the quiet serenity of where we live and the endless outdoor opportunities offered in our county. Between the countless bike trails, beautiful national parks, and hidden destinations, we live in one of the greatest counties in California. With our stunning forests however, comes responsibility to maintain and care for our forests. The Sierra Nevada is reliant on healthy forests and communities. As wildfires are becoming more severe, a call to action is required to produce safer communities and protect our natural resources.

Our forests are an attraction that bring business from tourists to our small businesses reliant towns. It is important that we take action to improve the health of our forests in order to also protect our local economies. Keeping our forests healthy also plays an important role in wildlife sustainability and California's water system. We need to approach this issue in a way that promotes our small businesses and provides jobs to young locals.

One solution lies in the increased use of small diameter wood. A business that specializes in the removal and use of small diameter lumber would be successful for several reasons. Hand-made high quality furniture is sought after by many who prefer supporting local business and are willing to pay a higher price for better quality. Furniture is just the beginning of uses for this lumber. Other uses include small household items, custom items, wood burning, and small toys. People, particularly tourists, will be happy to pay for a little piece of our forests to take home with them. Beyond wood working, there are also other business opportunities with small diameter lumber.

As of now, we are not utilizing the potential of small diameter lumber because we are burning it, contributing to greenhouse emissions. We are burning the small wood and brush in the forests, when this could be used for an array of other things such as a source of energy, glued laminated timber, wood fiber products, pulp chips, compost, and more.

Cleaning up our forests and repurposing the large amounts of biomass will not only reduce greenhouse emission, but play a key role in our California Water system, as mentioned earlier. Creating a business that utilizes and encourages the cleaning of our forest will yield higher quality water in more abundance. Maintained forests that are not overgrown will consume less water as the watershed travels to our lakes and rivers.

Overgrown forests are the breeding grounds for disaster whether it be devastating wildfire or beetle infestation. Finding a solution that promotes small business and employs locals is crucial to the sustainability of our economy and the health of our cherished forests.