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LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/
INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE
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June 13, 2016

The Honorable Cathleen Galgiani, Chair
Senate Agricultural Committee
1020 N Street, Room 583
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Galgiani:

**ASSEMBLY BILL 2511 (AMENDED MARCH 28, 2016) – FERTILIZING MATERIALS:
AUXILIARY SOIL AND PLANT SUBSTANCES: BIOCHAR**

The Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) is pleased to **support** Assembly Bill 2511 (AB 2511), as amended on March 28, 2016. AB 2511 would define biochar as an “Auxiliary soil and plant substance,” which is intended to improve germination and growth of plants under the State Food and Agricultural Code (Code).

If enacted, AB 2511 would specifically define biochar as materials derived from thermochemical conversion of biomass in an oxygen-limited environment containing at least 60 percent carbon. Biochar is a product that can be used as an agricultural property enhancer (fertilizer) applied to soil and plants for improvements to seed germination, plant growth, crop yield, agricultural product quality, reproduction, flavor, and other aspects of healthy soil and plant fertility and sustenance. By defining biochar as a product that improves soil health, as specified per its listing in the Code, AB 2511 would increase the market for biochar, thus increasing the viability of conversion technologies (CTs) that create biochar, which is a sustainable method for managing biomass.

Production and application of biochar have also demonstrated a promising potential to reduce greenhouse gas emission (GHG) by combatting the devastating effects the State’s long-term drought has had on California’s extensive tree population. As the drought has resulted in the death and decay of millions of trees, their decomposition has resulted in the emission of a substantial volume of fugitive methane, a short-lived climate pollutant the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has identified as the second most prevalent GHG emitted in the United States with a climate change impact 25 times greater than that of carbon dioxide. The State Air Resources Board also estimates methane as accounting for approximately 20 percent of global climate change.

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The Task Force has been a longstanding supporter of legislation that seeks to advance the generation and use of materials derived from CTs, including pyrolysis, to combat climate change in any constructive way possible. However, while the benefits of biochar's application in agricultural land use are far reaching and plentiful, we recognize the increasing use of this material will require effective regulation and oversight on the part of the State to ensure, among other things, its proper proprietary licensing, product registration, labeling, and other specified compliance, as appropriate. As such, we believe these issues qualify biochar as an appropriate listing among agricultural product definitions within the proposed Section 14513.5 of the Code.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (Assembly Bill 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared for the County of Los Angeles and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of ten million. Consistent with these responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

Based on the reasons provided herewith, the Task Force **supports AB 2511** as amended on March 28, 2016, and urges this committee to pass this bill. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer, a member of the Task Force, at MikeMohajer@yahoo.com or (909) 592-1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/
Integrated Waste management Task Force and
Council Member, City of Rosemead

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cc: Assembly Member Marc Levine
Each Member of the Senate Agricultural Committee
Senate Agricultural Committee Principal Consultant, Anne M. Megaro
California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities

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Each member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Sachi A. Hamai, Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer
Each Member of the California League Cities – Los Angeles County Division
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
South Bay Cities Council of Governments
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
Westside Cities Council of Governments
Each City Mayor and City Manager in the County of Los Angeles
Each City Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force