

Alameda County joins the 'cool' campaign

BY DAVID GOLL
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Alameda County has joined 11 other counties nationwide as charter members of the Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration, an effort to combat what its officials describe as the "potentially catastrophic effects" of global warming.

It is the only California county to join the campaign so far.

Alameda County officials hope a happy byproduct of the carbon-reduction efforts could be a flowering of the region's fledgling green business economy.

The initiative, announced last month at the annual conference of the National Association of Counties, has a goal of

reducing carbon dioxide emissions 80 percent by 2050, requiring a 2 percent annual reduction. It urges these carbon cuts be made not only on the local level, but is urging the federal government to adopt the same goal by, among other actions, raising fuel economy standards to 35 miles per gallon within a decade.

The county initiative mirrors the Cool Cities Campaign, which has already been signed by the mayors of more than 600 municipalities nationwide. Both campaigns are joint efforts by local officials and the Sierra Club, based in San Francisco, the nation's largest environmental organization with 1.3 million members.

In recent years, local officials around



Haggerty

the country have increasingly banded together to devise carbon-reduction plans, lamenting what many call a lack of leadership on the issue from the federal government. The state of California was the first in the nation to adopt a market-based effort to slash carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, while a similar carbon-reduction campaign called the Western Regional Climate Action Initiative has been adopted by Gov. Schwarzenegger and his fellow governors in Oregon, Washington, Arizona and New Mexico.

"I think it's pretty fair to say the federal government is not exactly moving

'Cool' counties

- Alameda County
- King County, Wash.
- Hennepin County, Minn.
- Dane County, Wis.
- Cook County, Ill.
- Shelby County, Tenn.
- Miami-Dade County, Fla.
- Fairfax County, Va.
- Arlington County, Va.
- Montgomery County, Md.
- Queen Anne's County, Md.
- Nassau County, N.Y.

Source: Alameda County

very fast on this issue," said Scott Haggerty, president of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. "Local governments have to fill the void and move ahead."

Haggerty added it's imperative for government to adopt energy-efficient initiatives itself at the same

time it asks the business community to curb carbon emissions. Alameda County saves about \$6 million a year by generating on-site power through 3.1 megawatts of solar installations and a 1-megawatt fuel cell at county facilities, including the Santa Rita County Jail Photovoltaic Project in Dublin.

Work on that project was done by PowerLight Corp., a manufacturer and installer of large-scale solar electric systems that announced its move from Berkeley to Richmond earlier this year.

Haggerty is quick to add that a growing percentage of county-owned vehicles run on vegetable oil that is discarded after being used in cooking at restaurants.

"Alameda County has shown real leadership on this issue, which is why we were asked to participate," Haggerty said.

As have many businesses in the county, the Alameda County Green Business Program, which offers technical assistance and incentives to companies that wish to gain a "green" designation by stepping up recycling and reuse efforts and cutting back on energy and water use, has now granted the certification to nearly 300 private businesses and public agencies countywide.

"There is absolutely an economic development component to this initiative," said Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County administrator, adding that eight county-owned sites now have solar installations and more are planned. "We are clearly encouraging businesses throughout the county to adopt some of these same practices and want Alameda County to become a center of green business for the entire area."

Muranishi, Haggerty and other Alameda County officials are challenging colleagues in the state's 57 other counties to join the Cool Counties initiative.

Keith Carson, an Alameda County supervisor once endorsed by the late David Brower, a prominent environmentalist and founder of the Sierra Club Foundation, agrees the county can capitalize on its credentials to become a center for green businesses. Carson represents the county at the National Association of Counties and the California State Association of Counties, where he plans to promote participation in the national program.

"I would like to see clusters of green business centers in the county," Carson said, noting the idea has also been advanced by Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums and Joseph Haraburda, president and CEO of the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. "We could become a national center for this industry."

Carson said the county is also getting its 14 cities in the act, with officials cooperating on carbon emission and other programs to promote environmental sustainability.