

10th Annual Statewide Energy Efficiency Forum

Closing Plenary – The Lasting Legacy of Local Government Partnerships

Salon A/B
Level: All

Thursday, June 27, 2019
3:00 – 4:00 PM

Notes prepared by Jeffrey L. Rabin, Urban Planning and Environmental Consultant and Former Los Angeles Times reporter

Speakers/Panel:

Laurel Rothschild, The Energy Coalition

Lou Jacobson, Redwood Coast Energy Authority

Courtney Kalashian, San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization

Alejandra Tellez, Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance

Renée Yarmy, Port of San Diego

Plenary Summary:

Speakers at the closing session were invited to “gather around the campfire” and tell stories. That’s exactly what they did.

Laurel Rothschild of The Energy Coalition traced the evolution of energy efficiency partnerships between local government and the state’s four major investor-owned utilities: PG&E, Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company, and San Diego Gas & Electric. The energy efficiency programs are funded through a special charge on the electric and gas bills of utility customers.

Courtney Kalashian is Executive Director of the Clean Energy Organization, which serves eight counties in the San Joaquin Valley, plus San Luis Obispo County and eastern San Bernardino County. She stressed the importance of building trust between local governments and utility partners. “The utilities helped us come up with innovative [energy efficiency] programs,” she said. “They’ve trusted us. We’ve trusted them.”

With her voice breaking, Kalashian described working with young children from high-poverty families who live in “hyper-rural areas” of Kings and Tulare County. The program used coloring books from Southern California Edison to help children in kindergarten; first, second, and third grades learn ways to save electricity at home. Kalashian choked up and dabbed tears from her eyes as she recalled a 5-year-old from a poor family telling her: “We don’t have our power turned on.”

Lou Jacobson said the Redwood Coast Energy Authority, based in Eureka, is unique in a lot of ways. The Authority provides traditional utility services and is also a Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) that supplies low-cost renewable energy to customers in hard-to-reach Humboldt County communities behind the Redwood Curtain. “We provide solutions on both sides of the meter, from the demand side and the supply side,” Jacobson said.

The Authority works on energy efficiency programs with chambers of commerce, businesses, and school districts. “We’ve found networking to be tremendously powerful.”

Alejandra Tellez of the Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance discussed the importance of “thinking outside the box.”

Renée Yarmy from the Port of San Diego acknowledged that “ports are a dirty industry.” She noted with pride that San Diego was the first West Coast port to complete a climate action plan. Yarmy is looking forward to



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working on adapting to sea level rise. Moving beyond traditional energy efficiency programs, the Port recently received a grant from the California Energy Commission to build a microgrid.

What are some words, phrases, or ideas that capture what practitioners need in order to successfully meet California's energy and climate goals?

Yes, speakers described how to overcome barriers to programs that make energy use more efficient.

What was inspirational or hopeful about this plenary?

The creative thinking that led to the placement of a cardboard campfire and trail mix on each table in the hotel ballroom. That created the perfect atmosphere for story telling.

The Zen moment the end of the session offered an opportunity to reflect on what was learned during the two-day forum.

Standout quotes:

“The only constant is change. We need to adapt and innovate.”

– Lou Jacobson, Redwood Coast Energy Authority

“I'm really excited about having goats.”

– Courtney Kalashian of the San Joaquin Valley Clean Energy Organization, which will use goats to clear vegetation below power lines to help prevent wildfires.

“Yeah, let's go for it!”

– Alejandra Tellez of the Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance describing a public health doctor's idea to provide energy efficiency training to community nurses who visit people in their home.

