The Multi-jurisdictional Renewable Energy Taskforce (“Taskforce”) emerged out of the 2nd Annual Central Coast Sustainability Summit (“Summit”) as a way to convene representatives from Santa Barbara County to work on renewable energy projects in our region. During the initial planning meeting, the Taskforce reviewed and prioritized the five potential projects that were presented at the Summit and decided on three (Community Choice Aggregation feasibility study, streamlining the permitting process and associated fees, and a joint renewable energy project) that would be the focus of the multi-jurisdictional renewable energy taskforce.

The purpose of the second Multi-jurisdictional Renewable Energy Taskforce (“Taskforce”) meeting was to follow up on the action items developed during the first meeting, recap the three projects that were chosen, devise a plan for each project, and discuss procedures for the taskforce. A total of eleven institutions were present for the second meeting, including representatives from the cities of Lompoc, Buellton, Goleta, and Santa Barbara, the County of Santa Barbara, a representative from Doreen Farr’s Office, Santa Barbara Air Pollution Control District, Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District, Community Environmental Council, Sustainable University NOW, and UCSB.

Summary of the Second Planning Meeting

The April meeting began with a short presentation on each of the three project ideas that were prioritized during the first meeting (Community Choice Aggregation feasibility study, streamlining the permitting process and associated fees, and a joint renewable energy project). Next, each attendee shared the feedback from its respective agency regarding the goals of the taskforce and participation in meetings and projects. The majority of representatives said that they could commit to attending future meetings of the Taskforce, while a couple attendees were unsure of their commitment due to limited resources. However, all attendees agreed that the Taskforce was a great way for them to increase communication with represented agencies, learn about projects happening in the county, and package a thorough and focused proposal to get support for a renewable energy project.

The second half of the meeting was focused on developing a plan for each project. Attendees were asked to form groups for each project based on their preferences. Groups formed around a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) feasibility study and a joint renewable energy project. Each group was asked a series of questions that would help them identify the goals of the project.

CCA Discussion Points

The group that focused on community choice aggregation feasibility study for their project identified several goals. These include:
• Identify funding. Look into grant opportunities for funding the feasibility study or split the cost of the study between jurisdictions (each pays $20,000).

• Determine the Scope of the project. Specifically, think about the geographical scope. Should Santa Barbara County participate in an existing CCA (for example, Marin or Sonoma County’s existing system) or is it better for Santa Barbara County to develop its own CCA?

• Timing. Most agency budgets have already been submitted for the 2013/2014 fiscal year, so any funding for a CCA feasibility study would not be available until 2014/2015. Can the Taskforce get some line items for CCA feasibility study into the next budget cycle once it determines how funding will work? A detailed proposal and acceptance of the project idea would likely need to happen within the next year before it can be included in any budgets.

This group also came up with an action plan that outlines several items that would need to happen in order to start working on this project. These include:

• Determine a lead agency. It was suggested that Santa Barbara County would be the best agency, because CCA is already in its Climate Action Plan. A Joint Powers Agreement would need to be created in order to follow through on the project (use Marin County as an example).

• Include CCA in the Climate Action Plans of other cities and agencies where appropriate.

• Generate political support. City and County staff cannot advocate for political items, so another party would need to work on this. Community Environmental Council (CEC) and Santa Barbara County Action Network are potential advocacy groups that can help.

• Identify and educate political leaders from each jurisdiction. Get political leaders to attend Taskforce meetings and generate support in other venues, like Board meetings.

• Create educational programs that focus on educating leaders in the community. CCA is a complex topic, and it needs to be explained in a thoughtful way.

• Get a representative from the Marin County or Sonoma County CCA to attend the Summit to give a presentation about CCA. This will help with the education piece.

• Fund outreach to voters. This is an interesting idea, but may get into politics with PG&E and SCE.

• Get more organizations to support the idea of CCA in Santa Barbara County.

Towards the end of the breakout session, this group identified immediate next steps to be taken by Taskforce members. The information described below will be brought back to the next Taskforce meeting.

• Megan Birney, CEC, will investigate grant opportunities that may be useful for getting funding for a CCA feasibility study.

• Jeff Hunt, the County of Santa Barbara, will look into the County’s Climate Action Plan implementation strategy and how CCA has been integrated into it. Jeff will also determine if the implementation budget includes any line items for CCA.

• Richard Flacks, Sustainable University Now, will develop a list of additional advocacy groups that could help garner support for CCA.
• Kate Kokosinski, UCSB, will invite a representative from the Marin or Sonoma County CCA to speak and educate about CCA during the Summit.

Joint Renewable Energy Project Discussion Points

The group that focused on a joint renewable energy project concentrated their discussion around bulk purchasing and site partnerships. Several goals were identified including:

• Identify feasible projects with a reasonable chance of success.
• Identify what will be affordable. What is our financial feasibility in terms of return on investment?
• Create public/private partnerships. If the renewable energy project (i.e., solar array) evolves into a large scale project that can serve many residents, it may merge into the CCA project.
• Determine a lead agency (the City of Santa Barbara was suggested). A lead agency will allow some structure for everyone to discuss what their own agency needs in order to participate. It also maintains local control.

This group also came up with an action plan that outlines several items that would need to happen in order to start working on this project. These include:

• Develop a consortium. Each governing body gets to make a decision regarding whether they are included in the project or not. This provides local control and helps identify which parties are involved. The consortium could include utilities if the project is large enough. The consortium might even enter into an agreement with utilities (Power Purchase Agreement).
• Develop a scope of work (SOW). The SOW should identify what we are looking for in this project. This may include joint purchasing language, information on how the consortium operates, and what amount of energy production we need or are seeking.
• Determine who will lead this effort and obtain agency approvals.

Towards the end of the breakout session, this group identified immediate next steps to be taken by Taskforce members. The information described below will be brought back to the next Taskforce meeting.

• Jerry Estrada, MTD, will come back with a draft scope of work document. This document will act as a starting point for the group to further explore how the project will take shape.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, the attendees identified that a summary document for the second meeting would be helpful for continuing the discussion with their agencies. In addition, the group decided that quarterly meetings are the most feasible for everyone. The next meeting will take place in July and the Taskforce will come back together to discuss its progress at the Central Coast Sustainability Summit in October.
No one chose the Streamlining Permitting Process and Fees project during the small breakout session. The Taskforce wants to focus its efforts where the majority of the interest lies. However, Cindy Moore is interested in the Streamlining Permitting project and has done some related work. This project will not be the mission of the taskforce but will continue to progress. Please contact Cindy if you are interested.

A few other next steps were identified during follow-up discussions after the second Taskforce meeting. The Community Environmental Council is willing to act as the advocacy agency for the CCA project and thinks it is important to get political support for the project by having signed letters of support from elected officials. There will be a grant opportunity in November that would be a good way to get funding for the CCA feasibility study. If support letters could coincide with the timing of the grant, it would be a perfect way to indicate that if funding were available, the agencies would be interested in a CCA feasibility study and approve CEC submitting the grant on their behalf. It will be important for any elected officials signing support letters to be involved in the educational talk given by the Marin or Sonoma County representative at the Summit.

Also, in order to move forward on the joint renewable energy project, it might be a good idea to spend some time in the next Taskforce meeting looking at potential sites for projects. This will help us decide the type and size of project that is feasible for us in Santa Barbara County.