

# EDITORIALS & LETTERS

## Clean Energy Potential Needs to be Tapped

By RANDY LENAC  
CAMPO RESIDENT

The region that covers San Diego's back country and Imperial County has been called the "Silicon Valley" of renewable energy in the United States. The diversity of natural riches – whether it's solar, wind, geothermal or the emerging algae industry – is an opportunity we cannot afford to waste.

A recent article in the Union-Tribune, entitled "Wind farm plan irks activists," focused on a select group of back country residents and environmentalists who are fighting planned wind farms. Putting aside the irony of "environmentalists" opposing clean energy for a minute, it's important to recognize that the economic development potential of this new field is exactly what our community needs.

The opportunity for new jobs and related economic benefits is absolutely vital to east San Diego County and the Imperial Valley, which suffers from one of the highest unemployment rates in the country and was economically depressed even before the current crisis hit. But this will not happen without leadership and foresight, just as Silicon Valley wouldn't have happened without vision.

For San Diego, the key to energy independence and freedom from fossil fuels is renewable power. Less than 100 miles from the coastline, enough untapped energy exists to power more than eight million homes and businesses. Obviously we could never possibly use all of that energy. But even harnessing a fraction of it would help our region realize far-ranging benefits, such as finally pulling the

plug on the South Bay Power Plant in Chula Vista, not to mention breathing and enjoying cleaner air.

The Union-Tribune article identifies Iberdrola's plan to build a 200-megawatt wind farm in and near the McCain Valley. That project is needed. It will create jobs, stimulate our local economy, and offset more than 145,000 metric tons of carbon-dioxide emissions annually. That's like taking 12,000 cars off the road each year. But that's just the beginning. Several other wind projects are also being planned because new infrastructure is on the way.

Experts agree that one of the main barriers to building large-scale renewable energy projects – besides local activists – is the lack of infrastructure to deliver that power to where a lot of people live. It's the typical

chicken and egg problem. Renewable developers don't want to invest millions without a freeway to deliver their product, and utility companies are generally reluctant to build infrastructure without power sources.

But a new project in Jacumba, called the ECO substation, will help break through that barrier and serve as a catalyst to jumpstart the potential of East County. Proposed by SDG&E, the substation will serve as a renewable hub for future wind and solar projects to connect to the grid. While the project won't be in service for another few years, it did recently clear a first regulatory hurdle at the California Public Utilities Commission.

Education, not exaggeration, is also important. Some

would have you believe that wind farms are not safe for humans or animals. Neither is true. The fact is renewable power is the future of our region, our state and our country. The next logical step is to embrace the development of facilities and infrastructure that support this industry.

Oct. 24, 2009 was the first annual National Wind Power Day. It was conceived by an environmental activist on Twitter and embraced by a small energy company in Nevada. Unfortunately, it went largely unnoticed. This effort, along with similar initiatives from T. Boone Pickens, is important to help the public value and appreciate the benefits of a renewable energy future.

There is no way around the fact that to build these types of necessary projects, you have to go where the resources are. The

relatively minor impacts must be weighed against the potential benefits for our entire region.

Those benefits – cleaner air, jobs, better quality of life – are there for the taking. When it comes right down to it, the priority during these difficult times should be to create jobs that will feed a family of four and reduce the impacts on our planet.

The Silicon Valley would not be the Silicon Valley today if the leadership hadn't existed to transform a depressed area into the world's epicenter for electronics. We have an incredibly rare opportunity to recreate that in our region. We should get our priorities straight. We should do it right. We should do it now.

## VFW, MECC Value Extolled

As we are in the holiday season we become more reflective as to the past year, where we are now, and what the new year will bring. There is no question that we are going through some difficult times; the "wars" that seem to drag on, no job security, the economy in turmoil, etc., but we still have much to be grateful for. We live in the greatest country in the world and most, no, the vast majority of Americans, no matter their political stance, religious beliefs or social/economic standing truly care about their country and all who live in it.

WE have two shining examples here in the mountains of those who care and are making a difference in so many ways for so many folks. They are the local VFW Post #2080 and the Mt. Empire Community Center.

The Campo VFW Post #2080 is legendary for their many years of service and commitment to the community, particularly our Veterans. I know of no Veteran that has ever been turned away when needing assistance. If the VFW post cannot provide assistance through official VA channels to do what they can on an individual basis, they find help in what every way possible. The Post provides a welcome environment for our Veterans where they can meet friends, share some stories and enjoy being with others. They provide the proper protocol and

services in honoring those Veterans that have passed on and in issues involving honoring our country (displaying the flag, laying to rest old, used flags, etc.).

The VFW is also to be commended for their continued service to the community; their annual Christmas party for children, the children's Easter Egg event and their contributions to local scholarships for our youths.

As the cost of living continues to rise, and many people are experiencing cuts in their incomes and benefits, the VFW provides a most welcome, free food program for local residents. Under the leadership of Bob & Gloria Fetters and Jane Hamilton, with the assistance of a fine team of volunteers and in partnership with Albertson's grocery they provide free food every Monday at the Post, no questions asked, no requirements, no forms to fill out, no one is turned away! For further information on the food program and other activities at the VFW Post please call 478-9212. Our appreciation to VFW Post #2080 and all who help to provide such valuable services to the back country,

The Mtn. Empire Community Center needs to be acknowledged and thanked for the all they do and provide, particularly for the Seniors. Under the guidance of Shannon Reed, and with the

assistance of Dianna Cox, the Community Center provides many services and programs for Seniors; SAFE driving class, energy saving tips and items (such as free water saving shower heads), health issues (free blood pressure test, etc.), services for shut-ins (at home assistance, food, health aid, etc.). There is legal advice available for Seniors through the Center (please call for information).

The Community Center now has a Resource Specialist on staff, Judy Gateley, who can help Seniors with many of our needs at home; care for our elders and the infirm, medial concerns, help with transportation, etc. If Judy cannot help you directly she has the network to put you in touch with almost anyone for assistance.

The Senior lunch program is one of the best services provided by the Mt. Empire Community Center. The kitchen staff; Lupe, Raquel, Mary and their fine team turn out delicious and nutritious meals every Wed., Thurs., and Friday. For a donation of \$2.50 for Seniors (no Senior is turned away if they do not have the money) and \$5.00 for non Seniors one can get one of the best lunches anywhere, delicious and well balance, with coffee, juice and milk provided. They also deliver meals to shut-ins and those who cannot come into the Center. And, it is sad to say that these hot lunches are the only hot meals that some of our Seniors get!

But... as importantly the Center lunch program provides a social center for many of us. Some of the Seniors have no families and few friends, so the lunches have become a social time for many. I have met and made some very good friends at the Center and so my life has been made much richer for joining the lunch group at the Center.

The Mtn. Empire Community Center is a great place to hold an event or fund raiser. The kitchen is available as is the entire center. Just a few activities at the Center; the Cinco de Mayo Celebration, awards programs, the Back To School program for children, Craft Shows, etc. Please call the Center for information on all they have to offer 478-5109.

So when we are giving thanks this year, and every year please include Campo VFW Post #2080 and The Mtn. Empire Community Center in your blessings. They are making a difference every day, for many. I know, my life is much richer for partaking of some of the services they provide. And please support them and those who assist them in their good works, we can all make a difference together.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Milo Angel  
Campo-Lake Morena

## The Christmas Gift

'Twas the night before Christmas, on Capitol Hill,  
The Speaker just passed her Health Reform Bill;

"It's a gift for the public," Pelosi has said,  
With 2000 pages, that none of them read;

She pushed for reform, with all of her might,  
She wasn't concerned with getting it right;

The public said no but that didn't matter,  
The Dems are resolved to make the Gov fatter;

With 3000 "shalls" and some slick language tricks,  
Pelosi has said that Healthcare it will fix;

At 1.2 Trillion, I can't pay the bill,  
But Pelosi is sure that my Grandchildren will;

We'll be taxed for this gift, want it or not,  
From now 'til forever with taxes a lot;

And buy it you will, or you'll pay a fine,  
All for the privilege of standing in line;

So there you are friends, the Speaker has spoken,  
She's taken your money to fix what's not broken;

That's it about Healthcare, but one thing to note,  
This all can be fixed with the power of vote!

MERRY CHRISTMAS,

Wally Palmer  
Campo Resident

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