

Conference on energy this weekend

Local government officials from all over California will gather at the Boulder Creek Country Club this weekend for a three-day conference on "Energy and the Economy," how energy affects state, local and federal governments.

The conference begins Friday and runs through Sunday. For information on attending, call the SolarCal Local Government Commission, 916-920-7621.

Among those scheduled to speak is James Lazar, nationally-known as one of the first whistle-blowers on the Washington Public Power Supply fiasco. In that case, five nuclear plants were begun in spite of studies recommending against them, and were never finished because of massive cost overruns.

The conference is sponsored by the SolarCal Local Government Commission on Conservation and Renewable Resources.

Commission Director Robert J. King said Boulder Creek was chosen as the conference site to "symbolize our commitment to Supervisor (Joe) Cucchiara's Equivalency Program."

Cucchiara said, "Local governments, it seems, need to help James Watt understand basic conservation principles. Capturing fuels we already have but which are wasted through inefficient use is the cheapest, quickest, and most environmentally sound way to make sure we all have an affordable supply of energy now and in the future."

Local conservation programs, he said, can offset the need for offshore oil drilling.

Lazar, senior economist for the Peoples Organization for Washington Energy Resources, said, "Communities like Santa Cruz are showing the rest of us what can be done. Community-based energy conservation programs are keeping the lid on utility rates."

Also scheduled for discussion are "Energy and the Economy," by UC Davis Professor Kenneth Watt, and the potential for city and county partnerships with the private sector to finance energy-efficiency projects. Arturo Gandara of the California Energy Commission and Wally McQuat, a financial consultant for energy-related projects, will lead that discussion