

Planning For Future Energy Needs

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After more than a year of work, a local grass-roots organization has finished a plan the group says can reduce energy use in this county by up to 35 percent, and can return to the community millions of the energy dollars which now leave the county.

Some 85 cents of every dollar spent on energy here now leaves the county, according to Energy Future Santa Cruz' statistics.

This translates into \$135 million dollars that are drained from the local economy, and 11,000 jobs, they say. The situation will only worsen in the future, as energy costs continue to rise.

But the 100-page plan, released at a press conference here this morning, could stem the rising tide of energy costs and lost dollars, according to spokesmen for the group.

By reducing energy use in residences, businesses, agriculture and transportation, and producing energy from renewable sources here, energy

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necessities will not turn into ill-affordable luxuries, they said.

The plan was developed through neighborhood meetings throughout the county. Sixteen "neighborhoods" were identified, and residents of those areas gathered to pinpoint problems and offer possible solutions.

The group's advisory board, which comprises a cross-section of community interests, compiled the ideas gathered into programs. Working committees of technical experts and other knowledgeable people analyzed financial, social and technological impacts of the proposed programs.

After a six-month review by the advisory board, the plan was formulated.

It identifies 16 priorities for immediate action among the 135 recommendations.

Priorities include curbside recycling, a local financing authority for low-cost loans for solar energy and conservation; an ordinance a conservation "retro fit" before a house can be sold; water quotas similar to the "lifeline rates" for power and gas,

changes in the government's planning process, and conservation measures in agriculture.

If just "the bare minimum of requirements" were met in the area of housing, \$6.6 million would enter the local economy instead of being exported, said Energy Future Advisory Board member Joe Cucchiara, also a county supervisor.

Now the plan is finished, it must be put into action. John Cohn, Energy Future director, said this would be done in four ways: local ordinances, recommendation for local government policy, financial incentive and volunteers.

Between 10 and 20 percent of the plan "may end up in resolutions of ordinances," he said. A public reception is scheduled for June 27 at 5 p.m. in the Live Oak Senior Center, near 17th Avenue and Capitola Road, to introduce the plan to the community.

Advisory board members will be there to answer questions, and wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

For further information, call 462-4750.