



Department of Planning & Building
Attn: James Caruso, Long Range Planning Division: Conservation Element
976 Osos Street, Room 300
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

SUBJECT: SLO County Renewable Energy Plan Recommendations

September 22, 2009

Dear Mr. Caruso:

The mission of the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS), a chapter of National Audubon Society, is to promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on the biological diversity of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, particularly in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, California. The MCAS Board, representing our over 900 members, unanimously present the following recommendations to the SLO County Long Range Planning Department:

1. That the County, through its Long Range Planning Department, Conservation Plan, takes the initiative to become a State and National leader in the field of energy conservation and renewable energy development.
2. That conservation of energy be a major element of that plan through weatherization of existing homes, and the establishment and enforcement of strict requirements for passive energy conservation in all new structures.
3. That concurrently a strong renewable energy plan be established, to include both wind and solar as key elements.

The turning point toward solar energy production in SLO County is happening now, both in dispersed and in commercial development. Due to the immediacy of this issue the MCAS Board feels strongly that it is urgent to establish a comprehensive solar plan now, with implementation of critical elements, without delay.

We would strongly encourage your division and other County departments to develop policies and / or action plans to:

1. Require energy conservation assessment of all new construction plans.
2. Require new construction plans to include provisions for the easy future addition of solar collectors to both residential and commercial construction.



3. Require developers of all major housing development projects to include solar or other renewable energy sources to the majority of that development.
4. Require new commercial buildings to include a maximum practical solar collection system.
5. Use solar applications as an option when development mitigation measures are warranted.
6. Encourage residential and commercial solar power applications by partnering with governmental, PG&E and other private agencies to reduce or eliminate the high start-up costs of solar applications. (We see this as the greatest single factor currently holding back large numbers of homeowners and businesses from immediate conversion to solar, and a vital part of both the long-term planning and the immediate needs of the community. We urge action toward this goal be instituted at the earliest possible date.)
7. Encourage commercial / centralized solar and other renewable energy development in the County in appropriate locations, but only with careful environmental assessments, with strict disclosures and adequate mitigations where needed.
8. Retrofit as many SLO County buildings as practical with renewable energy applications as a positive environmental example for the community at large.

The Board of the Morro Coast Audubon Society remains willing and anxious to work with all County agencies toward these goals and other environmental issues. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further with you and/or your staff – our board meets on the first Monday of every month.

Sincerely,



Christy Holmes
President, Morro Coast Audubon Society
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cc: Congresswoman Lois Capps
Senator Abel Maldonado
Frank R. Mecham, County Supervisor
Bruce S. Gibson, County Supervisor
Adam Hill, County Supervisor
K.H. "Katcho" Achadjian, County Supervisor
James R. Patterson, County Supervisor
Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee
Morgan Rafferty, Executive Director, ECOSLO
Chair, Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club