



PRESS RELEASE

COUNTY OF SONOMA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board Keeps the Lights On, Innovative Energy Program Will Stay Open For Business Board confident program's community and nationwide benefits will prevail over regulatory lack of understanding

Santa Rosa, Calif. – The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors strongly re-affirmed the County's commitment to the innovative Sonoma County Energy Independence Program (SCEIP) at the July 13th, Board meeting and directed staff to keep the program open for business while Congress grapples with recent regulatory hurdles. The SCEIP and other similar Property Assessed Clean Energy Programs (PACE) across the country have been called into question by recent regulatory action as to whether the program uses loans or assessments as the prime tool for financing.

The Board received a quarterly SCEIP update from Auditor-Controller Rod Dole and directed staff to keep the doors open to new applications and for staff to continue working with Congress and the Obama Administration to overturn the recently issued lending guidelines. The Board's action are predicated on the SCEIP providing full and complete disclosure about program participation to any potential applicants and ensuring the public fully understands the consequences of participation.

Chairwoman Valerie Brown commented, "It is truly shortsighted of one federal agency to not understand the benefits of PACE programs, especially the SCEIP. Our program reflects investment in clean energy, local job creation and fiscal prudence. We know hampering consumer's use of these

voluntary assessments is a bad call. Our Board's action will ensure people are fully informed of the options, risks and opportunities that exist when they work with SCEIP."

The Board further directed staff to work with the local banks and credit unions to develop options that would allow SCEIP participants to be independent of Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac concerns.

Auditor-Controller Rod Dole commented, "We have been working with our federal representatives and local governments from across the country, and the momentum is on our side. This type of program is the wave of the future and we are already seeing the benefits. We are confident that federal legislation will correct the regulatory action."

Supervisor Shirlee Zane quoting from the classic 1972 film *The Godfather* said of the County's ongoing support for SCEIP, "We need to go to the mattresses on this. This program is about jobs for our community and nothing is more important in today's economy."

Board action will keep the program open and accepting and processing applications.

The SCEIP has financed over \$34.5 million in approved contracts supporting 1,046 projects. These projects have produced hundreds of local construction jobs and reduced local green house gas reduction by 1,900 tons per year. The SCEIP is one of many innovative climate protection efforts that the Board has launched over the last few years. Additional efforts include the installation of solar arrays on several county facilities, the groundbreaking hydrogen fuel cell and encouraging employees to employ greener commute methods such as transit, walking and biking.

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The County of Sonoma is comprised of 26 departments and agencies that provide a full range of services to the community. It encompasses over 1,600 square miles and is home to more than 475,000 residents. Sonoma County government has a history of providing excellent and responsive public service while operating under sound fiscal principles. Sonoma County is located less than one hour north of San Francisco and combines in one location the beautiful Pacific coastline, award-winning wineries, majestic redwoods, historic towns, fine dining, and a wide variety of entertainment and cultural activities.