

## **Ferguson: Energy Matters**

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### **Everyone's Singing Kumbaya**

California officialdom has come to the realization that achieving the state's renewable energy goals will require a monumental planning effort. Electric energy resources on which the state will rely a decade hence must be identified and developed and the transmission system modified to accommodate the new energy flows. This process must begin immediately because lead times to construct new power lines are long.

Fortunately, many players are ready to begin and are seeking funding for their planning efforts. Pacific Gas & Electric obtained funds from the Energy Commission's Public Interest Energy Research program (PIER). Southern California Edison has filed a request for ratepayer funds at the California Public Utilities Commission, which is almost certain to be granted.

The CPUC staff is discussing starting their own program, as is Energy Commission staff. Even my own organization, the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technology, is seeking approval for a second PIER contract to facilitate renewable energy development plans on the strength of our work on Tehachapi and Imperial Valley.

There is much to be done in a short time, and all of us need more funds.

In recent months, however, I have begun to worry about how all this work will be coordinated. Duplication of effort is a potential problem. Data generated by one organization must be shared with the others, for example. Utilities must represent the state's interests in their planning efforts, not merely their own.

Planning massive changes in the state's energy system must be a team effort. The good news is that collaboration is the song that everyone is singing these days. At a recent workshop, every organization vowed that they are fully committed to working together.

On my optimistic days, I believe them.

However, the record gives me concern.

The feuding and turf battles between the CPUC and the CEC are legendary. Investor-owned utilities have been less than generous about sharing data in the

past. Municipal utilities won't come anywhere near the CPUC for fear of being regulated.

I have suggested that the two commissions establish a small coordinating committee to oversee the entire renewable energy development process, avoid duplication of effort, solve problems that interfere with cooperation, and keep the process on track. Much as I dislike yet another committee, in this case it appears essential.

There are millions of the public's dollars involved that must not be wasted. More importantly, California's progress on global warming depends on a united team effort from all of us. The CEC and the CPUC must bury their hatchets and work effectively together—a novel concept.

Discussions are under way on how best to coordinate the state's energy planning efforts. I hope to be able to report progress in the next few weeks.

In the meantime, gather around in a circle, hold hands, and sing:

Kumbaya, my Lord, Kumbaya. Kumbaya . . .

—*Dr. Rich Ferguson, Research Director, CEERT, rich@ceert.org.*