

Earth Talk

From the Editors of E/The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: What kind of job opportunities might be opened up by the new federal emphasis on green projects?

-- Dick Wetzler, St. Paul, MN

If it's a U.S. industry that has the potential to be cleaner and greener, chances are the Obama administration has already set aside some stimulus money for it. In February 2009, the new president signed the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law. Besides creating jobs, the bill promises to spur American companies to greener heights through investments totaling over \$75 billion.

According to Environment America, a federation of state-based environmental advocacy groups, the stimulus package includes \$32.8 billion for clean energy projects, \$26.86 billion for energy efficiency initiatives and \$18.95 billion for green transportation. Some of the key green features of the bill include accelerating the deployment of "smart grid" technology (systems of routing power in ways that optimize energy-efficiency), providing energy efficiency funds for schools, offering support for governors and mayors to beef up energy efficiency in private homes and public buildings, and establishing a new loan guarantee program to help renewable energy producers survive in down economic times.

With the private capital and credit so tight due to the recession, this influx of federal support is vital to help the still fledgling green energy and transportation sectors stay afloat. And most economists agree that it makes good sense to steer away from finite foreign oil toward homegrown renewable energy. Obama has promised the creation of some 500,000 jobs in the nation's burgeoning clean energy sector alone.

"The central facts here are irrefutable: Spending the same amount of money on building a clean energy economy will create three times more jobs within the U.S. than would spending on our existing fossil

fuel infrastructure," writes University of Massachusetts economist Robert Pollin in *The Nation*. "The transformation to a clean energy economy can therefore serve as a major long-term engine of job creation." Wind turbine engineers, insulation installers, recycling sorters and photovoltaic cell salespeople—along with the businesspersons behind them—can all look forward to bright and potentially lucrative futures.

This view is shared by the Solar Energy Industries Association, which predicts that the stimulus will help create some 119,000 jobs in the American solar sector alone before the end of 2010. Employers from solar cell manufacturers to green building materials retailers to wind farm maintenance firms to recycling haulers to energy auditors will likewise be looking to swell their ranks of employees with relevant skills.

The federal government itself is also in on the recovery effort beyond doling out the money. According to the official Recovery Act website, the General Services Administration's Public Building Service will invest \$5.55 billion in federal building projects, "including \$4.5 billion to transform federal facilities into exemplary high-performance green buildings, \$750 million to renovate and construct new federal offices and courthouses, and \$300 million to construct and renovate border stations." About \$1 billion worth of projects will be undertaken—a boon for everyone in the building industry, including construction workers, electricians, plumbers, air conditioning mechanics, carpenters, architects and engineers.

Contacts: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, www.recovery.gov; Environment America, www.environmentamerica.org; Solar Energy Industries Association, www.seia.org.

Send your environmental questions to: EarthTalk, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; earthtalk@emagazine.com. Read past columns at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php. EarthTalk is now a book! Details and order information at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalkbook. •

Rights

from page16

clinics from 2-5 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month in Hawthorne, at the Maxine Waters Health & Dignity Center in the Moneta Gardens Improvement, Inc. project, located at 11802 S. York Avenue in Hawthorne. Another walk-in clinic takes place 1-4 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month inside the Inglewood Police Community Center, located at 2901 W. Manchester Boulevard in Inglewood.

There are also two walk-in clinics held regularly in Carson. The first takes place from 9-11 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the Carson Farmer's Market, South

Bay Pavilion, at 550 E. Carson Plaza Drive in Carson. Then, another clinic takes place between 9-11 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month inside Carson's City Hall, at 701 E. Carson Street.

Suzanne Leuven wishes she had taken the time before she lost her house to find a group like the Housing Rights Center. If nothing else, she said, "I feel they would have listened to me and directed me in a better direction than I went." Espinoza expects to point the way through much more foreclosure-related frustration for at least a couple more years. "This problem," she said, "isn't going to go away."

Polo

from page 7

gave Gundo an extra period possession. Junior two-meter set Jackson Hogoboom proved to be an unstoppable force as he drilled the nets 43 times, including seven in one match against Redondo.

Christopher Cordobes (Robert's junior brother) was the true goaltender in just his first full summer of varsity play and averaged 10.2 blocks and four one-pass assists in all 22 games played.

True swimmer junior Jeffrey Allison led counters, sprinted and added six markers. Sophomores Ryan Kigawa (three),

Evan Peterson (two) and freshman Jonathan Combs (two) all lit up the scoreboard. Junior back-up goalie Matt Ginther collected 12 saves in six games and 10th graders Grant Hogoboom and Oscar Chen contributed much-needed playing time.

Both Blacksten and Reynolds were members of the fifth place-finishing Trojan Water Polo Club in the recent National 18 and Under Junior Olympics held at several venues around the Stanford University campus. There were a total of 48 teams entered. Blacksten "netted" 16 goals (and added seven assists) while Reynolds tallied three goals and also had seven assists in the 11 games played.

Special thanks from this reporter to Gundo, Eagle coach Danny Rajaniemi, our dedicated statistician Julianne Allison, and of course all our parents and fans who drove the team to all the game sites.

As senior Beau Blacksten so aptly put it, "We look to have a great team and lots of fun." Isn't that what the summer and all high school athletics are all about? Of course it helps to win, too! •

Water

from front page

toilets, smart sprinklers, greywater systems and rainwater capture systems.

"This is tough stuff," said McDowell. "These increases are significant. I would love for us to devise a way to design an income-qualified rate relief package for residents in our community who are having a tough time making it...while at the same time not bankrupting the City." The matter will come up again on August 18. Assuming the revised rate tables are approved then, the protest ballots will be printed and mailed out, with a public hearing set within a 45-day window. Councilmember Bill Fisher suggested that people who send in ballots be required to include their name, signature and address instead of merely checking a box. El Segundo has sent out such ballots in the past, with "incredibly low" numbers of protests, according to City Clerk Cindy Mortesen.

El Segundo Dinged by New State Budget

The recently passed California budget included a provision in the name of financial hardship to suspend Proposition 1A (legislation passed in 2004 to protect cities from having their collected revenues transferred to the state government) funding, which will reduce El Segundo's property tax revenues by eight percent.

City Finance Director Deborah Cullen reported that because of Sacramento's decision to "borrow" the Prop 1A monies, El Segundo will lose \$863,000 that had been earmarked for the 2009/10 fiscal budget. Under the arrangement, the State must pay back the debt with interest no later than June 30, 2013, and can only borrow twice in a 10-year period assuming the first loan is repaid. El Segundo also stands to lose another \$161,000 in deferred money next year as well as \$276,000 in state gas tax funds at some point in the future.

This means the Council will have to shave another million bucks or so from the 09/10 budget after having already cut \$6 million (or about 10 percent of the entire budget) during an especially difficult strategic planning session last month. Feeling confident the State will repay the money "one way or another" and the City will be even better off in the long run thanks to the interest payments on the loan, Councilmember Don Brann thought reserve funds could temporarily cover the shortfall instead of having to make additional budget cuts. However, McDowell was not convinced Sacramento will be able to make good on its IOUs, noting the State went back on a promise not to use Prop 1A money. "We should consider the money gone," said the Mayor. "If it comes back, great."

Early Retirement Program in the Works

An early retirement program for eligible employees could save the City an estimated \$300,000 in salaries per year, according to Human Resources Director Bob Hyland, who on Tuesday updated the Council on a plan to amend a contract with California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS). Currently 60 City employees meet the eligibility requirements (department heads and public safety personnel do not qualify), of which 19 have expressed some level of interest in retiring. Hyland said it is "fairly likely" nine of those will actually retire and if four of those positions are left vacant, the City will then see the \$300,000 savings. However, he cautioned that the true savings cannot be determined just yet because it's still unknown how many people will officially accept the opportunity.

The City must take on long-term costs to enter into the new agreement, however. Beginning two years after the contract amendment, the City's PERS employer rate will go up 0.16 percent, or about \$25,000 a year, extended over a 20-year period. Busch pointed out that the \$500,000 total cash outlay (based on the nine retiree assumption) will be made up in less than two years by the salary savings.

Bus to Plaza El Segundo and Green Line

Beach City Transit's (BCT) Line 109 recently expanded to include stops at Plaza El Segundo and the Douglas Green Line Station, it was announced Tuesday night. The new services debuted on June 28. BCT representative Fiona Diaz said she will return to the Council in six months with a progress report on the expansion and updated ridership numbers. According to statistics, annual ridership figures for Line 109 increased slightly in 2008/09 (from 174,991 to 176,277).

Diaz also provided a customer service number to reach Transit Division staff: 310-318-0631, extension 2860, and noted that the agency is in the process of enhancing its website.

COPS Grant Monies Approved

El Segundo received \$25,000 in grant funds connected to the Citizens Option for Public Safety (COPS) legislation passed in the mid-90s. The grant requires the money to be used for "front line law enforcement," which in the past subsidized items such as replacement handguns for all officers, less-than-lethal shotguns, tasers, DUI enforcement, and mobile data computers. Some of the new funds will likely be spent on similar equipment. Staff also recommended using the monies for technology upgrades to replace/upgrade the station video monitoring and recording system, to purchase a PIPS Automated License Plate Recognition System, to provide overtime funding for special enforcement details, and to cover overtime costs connected with training recruit police officers. El Segundo Police Captain Bob Turnbull noted that in past years, this grant was typically \$100,000.

Investment Policy Adopted

The Council adopted the City's investment policy, as annually required by state code. City Treasurer Ralph Lanphere said this policy hasn't changed for several years, but reported that El Segundo's portfolio is down in today's economy. To be on the safe side, the City currently only invests in cash, such as money markets and Local Agency Investment Funds (LAIF—a six-month fund with \$21 million in the account earning only one percent). When asked when the City might again venture beyond cash-only investments, Lanphere replied, "Maybe next year, if things turn around."

Lifeguard Station Gets Funding

The Council agreed to enter into a funding agreement to kick off the El Segundo Beach Lifeguard Station project located adjacent to the bike path at the south end of the beach parking lot at the end of Grand Avenue. Subsidized with \$1.7 million in county grant monies—specifically discretionary funds provided by Supervisor Don Knabe—the project will include a lifeguard station, storage area for the lifeguards and up to five restrooms. Councilmember Carl Jacobson abstained from the vote because he was uncomfortable about the City taking on a potential \$50,000 annual maintenance cost. Mayor McDowell felt the parks and recreation benefit to the project outweighs the concerns.

