

Governor sees green future

San Bernardino Sun

Feb. 11, 2008

By Andrew Edwards

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger touted green technology as a clean engine for economic growth during a Monday night address. “We can protect our environment, and we can protect our economy,” he said at the conclusion of his remarks.

The governor spoke at the Riverside Convention Center during an awards ceremony hosted by Inland Empire Waterkeeper.

The governor said nearly \$2 billion was invested in California “cleantech” industries last year and predicted that green technology firms will add 100,000 jobs to California’s economy by 2020.

“I don’t have to tell you how important it is to create jobs,” Schwarzenegger said.

Cleantech Group LLC, a San Francisco firm that tracks green industry, defines “cleantech” as innovations that reduce environmental harm and help companies’ bottom lines. Examples of cleantech include solar power, hydrogen fuel cells and electric cars.

Besides Schwarzenegger’s visit, the evening was notable because Southern California Edison presented a \$250,000 grant to Riverside Land Conservancy for habitat preservation and trail planning in the San Timoteo Canyon area.

Schwarzenegger, a Republican, has highlighted environmental issues during his second term and has sought to position Sacramento as a greener place than Washington, D.C.

For example, the state filed a lawsuit against the federal Environmental Protection Agency in January. Schwarzenegger wants California to have the power to enforce stricter auto emissions standards than those enforced by the EPA.

Schwarzenegger said there are billboards in Michigan that slam him for pursuing tougher environmental policies for autos. Schwarzenegger said his reply is that if Detroit’s auto manufacturers do not produce cleaner vehicles, foreign competitors will take up the challenge and “What I’m really saying to Detroit is ‘Get off your butt,’” the governor said. “Get off your butt and join us.”

Inland Empire Waterkeeper, founded in 2005, is an offshoot of the Costa Mesa-based Orange County Coastkeeper, which established a presence in the Inland Empire because much of the pollution that flows into Orange County beaches down the Santa Ana River watershed originates inland.

“We’re planning to do a cleanup here of Mill Creek in Mentone,” said Lee Reeder of the Waterkeepers, identifying one of the group’s future activities in the area.”

Riverside Land Conservancy has been in the effort to create San Timoteo State Park. Gail Egenes, the conservancy's administrative director, said the organization will use grant money to work on plans for San Gorgonio Pass land to the west of where the 10 and 60 freeways merge.

The evening's awards were presented to Riverside county Supervisor Marion Ashley, Riverside Land Conservancy Member Jane Block and developer Ali Sahabi. Sahabi is president of SE Corp., developer of the Dos Lagos project in Corona, and founder of the Green Institute for Village Empowerment.

The Green Institute's Web site describes the organization as the sponsor of the Green Valley Initiative, an effort to promote renewable energy, alternative transportation and "green" technology to the Inland Empire.

It might seem surprising that an environmental group would give an award to a developer, but in Inland Empire Waterkeeper's case that's not very shocking. Orange County Coastkeeper has also sought to cooperate with major developers.

"We have built relationships with the development community where we are invited to participate in the design process," said Garry Brown, who founded Waterkeeper and Coastkeeper.

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