

‘Green’ light is on the I.E.

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Newspaper Editorial

As the “green” movement underscores, our motives don’t always have to be pure for the right thing to happen.

What’s driving the resurgence in environmentalism is, plain and simply, the economy. It’s why, as gasoline approaches \$4 a gallon, I get stopped every other day by someone inquiring about my Toyota Prius (yes, ha ha, it gets 45 miles a gallon).

It’s why companies are reminding employees to turn off the lights during off hours, and why energy-efficient light bulbs are flying off of store shelves.

The retailers get it, and smell a different kind of green. With Wal-Mart hawking environmentally friendly pajamas and Dell promising to build the most environmentally sound computer on the planet, Advertising Age magazine wryly asked this past week if Earth Day had become the new Christmas.

Ironically, the greenest of would-be presidents, Al Gore, chose not to run this year, which continues his pattern of unfortunate political timing. Then again, he is cashing in on his 2007 Nobel Prize to the tune of more than \$100,000 per speaking engagement.

Yep, it pays to be green. But to quote Jon Lovitz, is that so wrong?

For the Inland Empire, in fact, environmentalism has the potential to become what the microchip industry was to the Silicon Valley. San Bernardino and Riverside counties have formed what’s known as the Green Valley Initiative, designed to promote “green technologies with balanced economic and community development.”

From wind farms to solar and geothermal research to San Bernardino County’s promise to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, the region is poised to create a new and powerful economic base while addressing its reputation as a smog capital.

Why here? Why not? The Inland Empire is in need not only of a bold, new economic driver, but also a way to offset the environmental cost in recent years of more freeways, more cars and more people.

This meshing of green living and greenbacks was hardly what Earth Day’s founders envisioned when they staged their first nationwide demonstration 38 years ago Tuesday. But if the result is cleaner air, alternative fuels and more jobs, it seems everybody wins.

Which leads to another kind of green – the envy of communities that don’t see what we do.

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