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SANTA BARBARA, SAN LUIS OBISPO AND VENTURA COUNTIES/CITIES EXPLORE NEW ENERGY MODEL

Website Launched as Regional Governments Explore Cooperative Purchasing for Electricity

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) -- The counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura, and many cities in the region are jointly exploring Community Choice Energy as a means to put energy purchasing and pricing options into the hands of local decision makers, allowing the community to determine what type of energy mix and programs serve its needs. Community Choice Energy, also known as CCE or Community Choice Aggregation, enables local governments to leverage the purchasing power of their residents, businesses and governmental entities to purchase or generate power for their communities. CCE gives communities greater choice to purchase their energy from green or renewable sources to help the environment while keeping rates competitive.

Under CCE, a non-profit public agency would be formed to purchase the electricity flowing to area homes and businesses and set rates for the electricity generation portion of customer bills. The existing utility company would continue to deliver the electricity, send bills and provide customer service. Most customers would not notice any change other than the current utility's electric generation charge being replaced by a CCE electricity supply charge on their utility bill.

Community Choice Energy is a new, but tested, model for providing electricity. Existing CCE programs across the state have offered electricity with a higher renewable energy content, in some cases from local solar and other renewable energy projects, while keeping electricity rates on par with the existing utilities. The two longest-running CCE programs—in Marin and Sonoma counties—are financially sound; offer customers stable, generally lower rates and have healthy cash reserves that are being reinvested locally in renewable energy, energy efficiency and jobs.

An advisory working group comprised of representatives from the three counties and the cities of Camarillo, Carpinteria, Moorpark, Ojai, Santa Barbara, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Ventura is overseeing a feasibility study, which is in the early stages. A website (www.CentralCoastPower.org) has been developed to keep the public informed of the local progress in evaluating opportunities and risks of CCE and how CCE may impact area homes and businesses.

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COUNTIES/CITIES TO EXPLORE NEW ENERGY MODEL

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All 27 eligible jurisdictions in the tri-county region are included in the study that will help determine whether CCE is appropriate for the region. The results of the study are expected to be presented in early 2017, at which time a decision about whether to move forward with a local or regional CCE program would be made by each city and county. Jurisdictions that opt to proceed with CCE would likely form a joint powers authority and prepare a more detailed business plan for how it will serve the region's electricity needs while meeting policy goals, such as transitioning to a cleaner electricity supply and boosting the local economy.

To sign up for email updates and learn more about CCE, visit CentralCoastPower.org.