

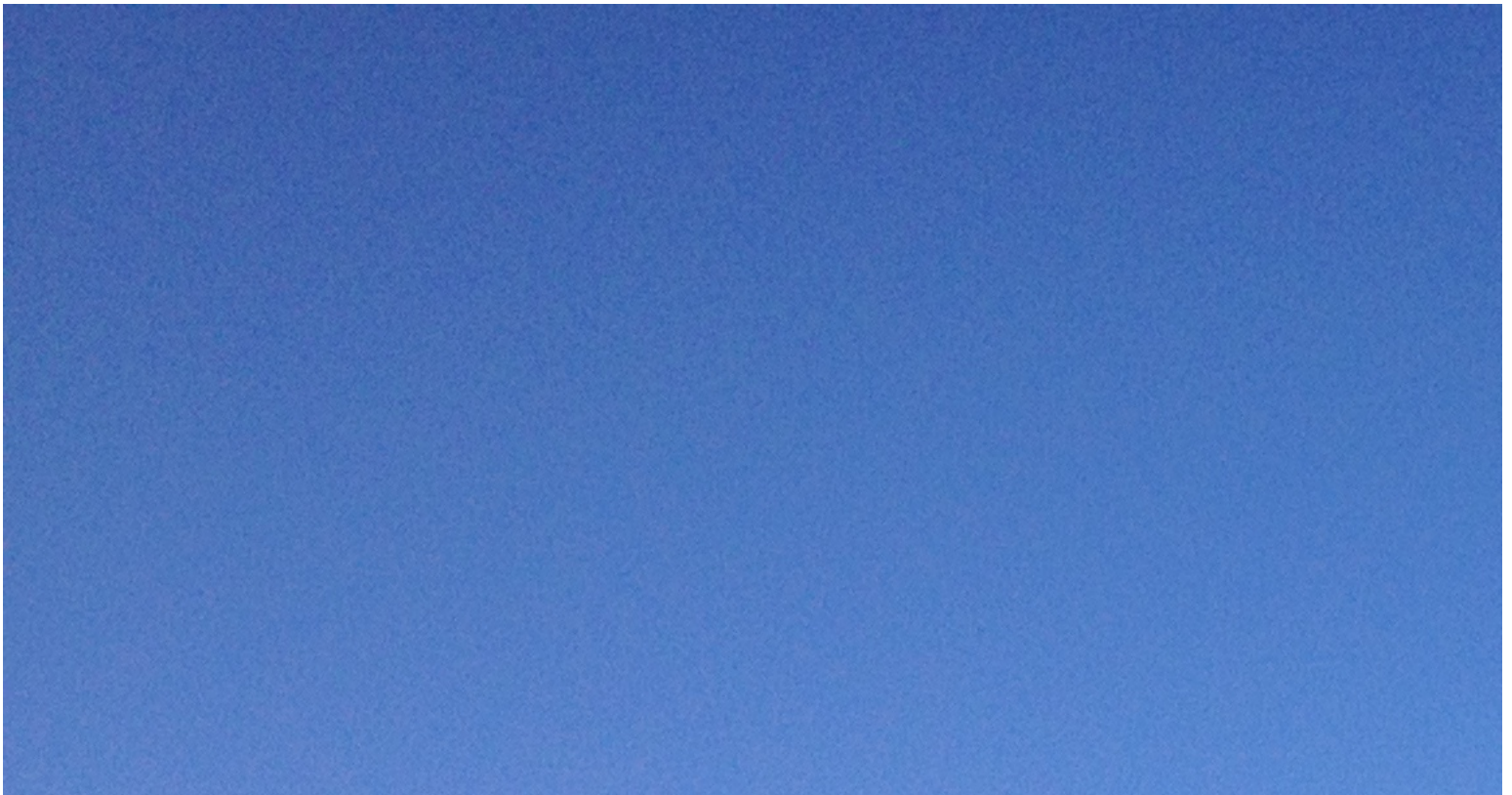
Winds of Change: SoCal Energy Summit Explores Sustainability in the Coachella Valley



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Windmills are the first unmistakable landmark that stand tall and proud greeting every visitor driving on the I-10 Freeway into the Coachella Valley. They are such a big part of our region not only for the aesthetic value, but also for contributing in the creation of alternative energy in Southern California.

In order to discuss similar opportunities for clean energy and energy efficiency, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments and CV Economic Partnership hosted its fifth annual Southern California Energy Summit: a two-day event comprised of a Renewable Energy bus tour on October 3 and an Energy Summit on October 4 with multiple panel discussions featuring a vast array of energy experts.







The bus tour, which departed from the Coachella Valley Water District, featured stops at the Desert Rose Project (a solar-powered affordable housing project provided by GRID Alternatives, a non-profit), at the All American Canal (where Colorado River water is used in micro irrigation techniques for our valley's crops and agricultural field) and, at Sun Peak Solar (a 123 acre Solar Plant in the Imperial Valley).



The tour also took us to the Salton Sea to visit two of the many Geothermal Plants that operate in this area, as this lake's geothermal field is among the world's largest and highest temperature resources because it lies directly inside an active plate tectonic boundary. The Featherstone Plant at Hudson Ranch, built in 2010, uses world-class technology to deliver "base load" electricity at very high capacity factor averaging 95%. As such, this is the best renewable energy solution available to replace aging coal and nuclear power plants.



The Summit, held the next day at the Palm Springs Convention Center, was incredibly informative and gave a lot of food for thought to the 500 participants. The day opened with a welcome message by **Mayor Steve Pougnet**, and a group of brilliant keynote speakers followed.

Jonathan Weisgall, the V.P. of Legislative & Regulatory Affairs of the MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, and **Commissioner Mike Florio** from the California Public Utilities Commission both indicated how much a hundred-year-old industry has changed in the last two decades. But there are still many challenges to face in order to be completely dependent on renewable energy.

The discussion panels led by other energy specialists with guests from the legal, public and private sector echoed the same sentiments. Actress and Environmentalist **Daryl Hannah** was the key speaker, and presented an original perspective on the energy issue with different solution-based arguments.





While she said that “we need to shift our policies to make changes feasible,” she also advocated a more grass-roots approach, saying, “we need to allow citizens to participate in the process.” Since “we all depend on air and water,” she encouraged everyone to do their part in saving energy and learning about alternative energies, and to share this knowledge with others.

As one of the largest economies in the world, the Golden State has been a pioneer in sustainable energy. Nevertheless, there is so much more room to grow.

