



Women's Energy Matters  
P.O. Box 548, Fairfax CA 94978  
510-915-6215 \* 415-457-1737  
www.womensenergymatters.org

## For Immediate Release

Contact: Jackie Wright

June 5, 2008

Wright Enterprises, 415 824.3990

### Women's Energy Matters Counters PG&E Attacks on Marin Clean Energy

*PG&E allegations met with questions at County Board of Supervisors and Fairfax Town Council.*

**Fairfax, CA-** Investor-owned utility (“IOU”) Pacific Gas and Electric Company presented its typical “too costly, too risky” arguments against *Marin Clean Energy* (MCE) Tuesday and Wednesday at the Marin County Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax Town Council. At both meetings, Women’s Energy Matters (WEM) Executive Director, **Barbara George** questioned PG&E’s stability and its commitment to clean energy and praised the county’s Community Choice plan, MCE, as the truly green plan. Elected officials expressed concern that PG&E itself is “too costly and too risky.”

WEM is one of only four or five public interest parties (“intervenor”) in key energy cases at the California Public Utilities Commission. At the Board of Supervisors meeting, George held up a document from PG&E’s Long-Term Procurement Plan, with page after page of blacked-out data, demonstrating that there’s no way to verify PG&E’s own costs. George also gave a brief Power Point presentation “**How Green is PG&E?**” including these facts:

- **As of 2002 PG&E owned the dirtiest coal power plants in New England; it lost those plants in bankruptcy — its second bankruptcy in two years.**
- **Suddenly, PG&E declared itself “Green;” however, it only offers 13% renewables and admitted to CPUC that it would miss the state mandated target of 20% by 2010.**
- **PG&E opposes raising the renewables target to 33% by 2020; told CPUC it wants “other options.” PG&E’s CEO has stated he wants to explore nuclear investments, and the company plans to build a pipeline to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Oregon. LNG emits almost as much greenhouse gases as coal.**
- **PG&E’s ‘Green PR’ states “We Can Do It,” but Marin Clean Energy can do it better, faster and cheaper than PG&E.**

Additionally, **Dawn Weisz** of the County’s Sustainability Team, who coordinates planning for *Marin Clean Energy*, pointed out that PG&E made questionable assumptions in its efforts to make MCE look more costly. For example, PG&E projected a 20-year term to pay back renewable energy investments, while MCE will have a 30-year term. It also used out-dated assumptions to claim a low output from wind farms, while current windmill technology provides much more energy.

PG&E has made a new proposal to satisfy the County’s interest in clean energy by offering to try to get CPUC to approve a higher “green tariff” just for Marin. Supervisor **Judy Arnold** pointed out inconsistencies in that proposal: “If charging more allows PG&E to procure more renewables, how can PG&E say that MCE will have a hard time finding enough renewables?” She asked, “How much price stability is PG&E willing to offer, so we can do a comparison?”

PG&E representative **David Rubin** gave an indirect response: “PG&E has a natural hedge associated with hydro and nuclear but is not completely insulated from [rising] natural gas costs.” He said he appreciated that the County wants renewable energy for price volatility protection. Later, Rubin admitted that a special green tariff for Marin Co. would likely meet stiff opposition at CPUC.

PG&E’s proposal has been presented to County Supervisors in private meetings; it has not yet been released to the public. Barbara George asked to meet with Supervisors to provide more information she has gleaned from her work in CPUC proceedings.

Supervisor **Susan Adams** pointed out that in PG&E’s own chart, three public power districts meet or exceed the green energy PG&E is providing — Palo Alto, Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) and Alameda. She questioned whether PG&E included its profits in their calculations.

Supervisor **Steve Kinsey** responded to PG&E’s warning that there’s a risk if MCE falls apart. He concluded that MCE’s risks were manageable; “It’s a different level of risk than we already went through with PG&E going bankrupt.”

On Wednesday, another PG&E representative trotted out the same, word-for-word “too costly, too risky” presentation to the Fairfax Town Council, which had indicated last week that it wanted to be the first city to sign the ordinance calling for the Marin Clean Energy Plan.

Fairfax Vice Mayor **David Weinsoff** stated, “CCA represents a new paradigm. You [PG&E] don’t deal with externalities. Even if it costs a little or a moderate amount more, we can’t continue down the path of more greenhouse gas emissions from imported oil and gas. We want home-grown energy.”

Councilmember **Larry Bragman** questioned PG&E including nuclear energy as “green.” He also pointed out that MCE’s non-profit status will be a savings to ratepayers. Fairfax Mayor **Mary Ann Maggione** stated, “We have come to a point that we need to do something and give people a choice. Nothing we do can eliminate risk, but we can create opportunity. We need to move further and we need to move faster,” added Mayor Maggione.

Councilmember **Law Tremaine** underscored the Mayor’s sentiment. “Financial risk vs. public safety risk; financial risk vs. planetary risk. This is a wrong-headed argument. *We* are at risk and it’s not ok. A certain amount of financial risk is inherent in anything. We need to make a change. We won’t be around if we don’t,” said Tremaine.

Once again, Barbara George and Dawn Weisz rebutted PG&E’s claims, and other public comments strongly supported MCE. Rebekah Collins, who the Council honored last week for bringing the sustainable energy concept to Marin eight years ago, urged audience members to reach out to friends throughout the county and encourage them to ask their local officials to support MCE.

*Background:* California’s Community Choice law was approved in 2002. It enables cities and counties to control their energy purchases and benefit from competition in energy markets. Community Choice allows for low cost public financing options to dramatically increase renewables and efficiency, with little or no rate increase. A quarter of California citizens already enjoy the benefits of community-based energy systems, such as the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), which provides more renewable energy and efficiency per customer than any utility nationwide and offers 40% lower rates than PG&E.

**Video of the Board of Supervisors’ and Fairfax Town council meetings will be posted at [www.womensenergymatters.org](http://www.womensenergymatters.org).** Upcoming meetings on MCE include Ross Town Council, June 12, MCE Workshop at Marin County Fair, July 6 and the Novato City Council, July 8<sup>th</sup>. Check [www.marincleanenergy.info](http://www.marincleanenergy.info) for updates.

**About Women's Energy Matters** Women's Energy Matters (WEM) is a network of women and men who approach energy issues from a woman's point of view. WEM works for a rapid transition to an efficient, renewable energy system, in order to promote healthy communities and ecosystems and improve international relations. WEM also celebrates the ways women have used their own energy through the ages to work for the public good. See: [www.womensenergymatters.org](http://www.womensenergymatters.org).