



Bay Area Monitor

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A Bimonthly Review of Regional Issues

Choosing Renewability

By Cecily O'Connor

The number of Bay Area customers purchasing renewable energy through community choice aggregation (CCA) programs could more than double by the fall as cities advance greenhouse gas reduction goals.

In 2002, Assembly Bill 117 (Migden) authorized cities and counties to establish CCAs for procuring and/or developing their own clean energy sources like wind and solar, rather than purchasing power from Pacific Gas & Electric Co. Through CCAs, consumers can buy between 50 to 100 percent renewable energy.

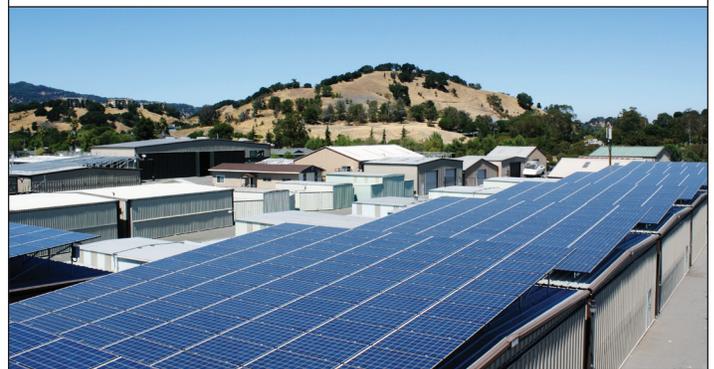
In October, between 70,000 to 90,000 San Francisco residents will purchase 100 percent renewable energy when CleanPowerSF rolls out, said Charles Sheehan, spokesperson at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which is overseeing the city's CCA. It has a five-year contract with Shell North America and long-term plans to provide clean energy through resources it owns and operates.

The nearly three-year-old Marin Clean Energy program, run by the not-for-profit Marin Energy Authority, served 90,000 residential and commercial customers in Marin County at the end of 2012. By July, it plans to integrate another 30,000 customers in the Contra Costa County city of Richmond, said Jamie Tuckey, communications director for the Marin Energy Authority. The program, which also contracts with Shell, could increase its purchasing power with the addition of Richmond.

"Marin does provide a good example of how a CCA can be established and successful," said Tom Kelly, executive director at Berkeley-based Kyoto USA, a grassroots group helping communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



CCAs like Marin Clean Energy reinvest ratepayer revenue into local renewable energy projects such as this one in San Rafael, where solar panels were recently installed on the airport rooftop. *photos courtesy of the Marin Energy Authority*



Another North Bay CCA, Sonoma Clean Power, is undergoing investigation and development through the Sonoma County Water Agency. The plan is to provide service as early as next winter to an initial 10,000 to 14,000 customers, said Cordel Stillman, the agency's deputy chief engineer. There's also lots of interest in the East Bay to launch a community choice aggregation program, although challenges exist.

"We are really excited to have company so we are not the only CCA in California," Tuckey said.

Cities are interested because CCAs help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change. They also provide a revenue stream to pursue local energy development, and

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subsequent job creation. For example, the Marin Energy Authority recently inked a power purchase deal with the San Rafael Airport for rooftop solar – a move that created 20 jobs.

A city or county with a CCA has greater control in setting electricity rates, thereby offering competitive bills to consumers seeking choice in energy providers.

“Right now, there is no competition in the power industry,” Stillman said. “We’re offering constituents a choice in how they are served electric power.”

Historically, investor-owned utilities like PG&E were the default service provider until the 2002 law shifted default status to local CCA programs. State law mandates all CCAs operate as opt-out programs.

Those who opt out can keep PG&E’s 19 percent renewable energy service. PG&E also expects to launch a 100 percent “green option” program with a \$6 monthly price tag. Under this program, PG&E would purchase renewable energy certificates to match the portion of a customer’s energy use that is not already delivered from an eligible renewable source.

This program is not intended to “undercut existing” CCAs, said Joe Molica, PG&E spokesperson.

“We heard through customers ... and elected leaders that they wanted us to provide this option,” Molica said. “Many residential customers don’t own and don’t have the financial means to put solar on their roof.”

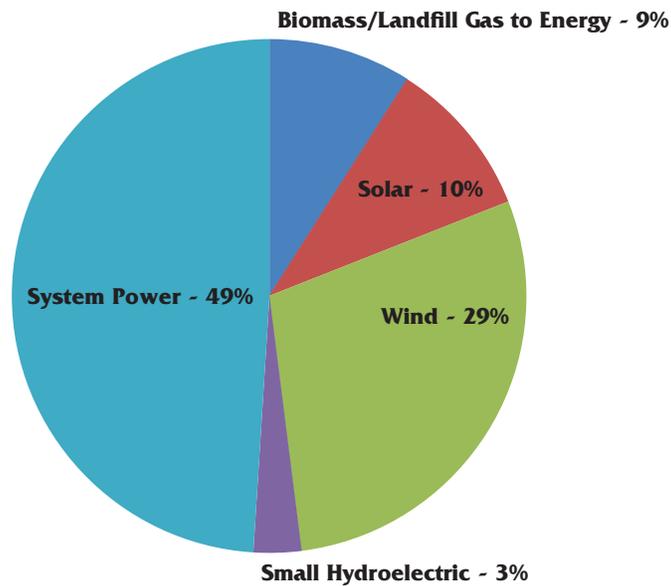
But from a city or county perspective, PG&E’s forthcoming program does not offer local control the way CCAs do.

That said, establishing a CCA is a big undertaking. There are risks related to participation, development and implementation costs, and potential utility opposition. While there is the promise electricity revenues will flow back into the community, start-up costs such as feasibility studies, consulting fees, and staffing add up quickly. Funding can be hard to come by, too.

For example, the Sonoma County Water Agency estimates it will cost \$2.5 million to get Sonoma Clean Power ready for service next year. The agency is putting up \$1 million, an investment that will be restructured as a loan to Sonoma

MARIN ENERGY AUTHORITY RESOURCES

According to estimates from the November 2012 annual update of the Marin Clean Energy Integrated Resource Plan, the Marin Energy Authority’s proportion of renewable energy in its 2012 resource mix was 51 percent, the highest of all known utilities in California:



System power is what all utilities use when they need additional power because they don’t have enough on hand to supply customers.

In the years ahead, the Marin Energy Authority intends to increase the proportion of renewable energy in its resource mix, with the long-term goal of reaching 100 percent.

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Published for more than 35 years as a project of the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund, the *Bay Area Monitor* covers transportation, air quality, water quality, open space, and land use issues in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, distributing information on these topics for the benefit of elected officials, government employees, libraries, media outlets, League members, nonprofit organizations, business leaders, and engaged citizens.

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Clean Power and paid back after it's been in operation for a year. It's investigating several options — loans and bonds — for the remaining \$1.5 million.

"We are scratching around trying to determine where that's going to come from," Stillman said.

Sonoma isn't the only area facing headwinds. The board of the East Bay Municipal Utility District voted against further CCA study in December. Board members suggested the cities expressing interest — Berkeley, Oakland, Albany, and Emeryville — form a joint powers authority for the establishment of their own CCA.

"We have to take more responsibility for doing this ourselves," said Al Weinrub, coordinator at the Local Clean Energy Alliance, which supports the idea of an East Bay CCA that develops and relies on local renewable energy sources.

Others are watching Marin to see if there's potential to expand into other cities beyond Richmond.

"The advantage of going with an existing entity is they have a credit rating and existing operation," said Neal DeSnoo, the City of Berkeley's energy program manager.

Berkeley has not had formal discussions with the Marin Energy Authority, DeSnoo said.

The Marin Energy Authority has no current plans to add additional cities, Tuckey said. Further expansion would

"ultimately become a policy decision by our board."

In the meantime, providing renewable energy that's competitive and affordable is a priority. But consumers might have trouble determining whether their local CCA is more cost-effective than PG&E, and vice versa. Electric utility rates are dynamic in nature, and vary based on monthly usage.

Keep in mind, the CCA replaces PG&E's charge for the procurement of electricity, listed on the customer's bill as "generation." The remainder of services — billing, electricity delivery, power line repair, and maintenance — is still provided by PG&E.

The typical residential user of the Marin Clean Energy "Light Green" (50 percent renewable) product pays \$1.70 less than they would with PG&E's regular rates, based on PG&E's rate changes effective January 1, according to the Marin Clean Energy website.

"The comparison is a snapshot in time," Tuckey said. "Last month we were a little more expensive."

When CleanPowerSF launches, the majority of customers will see a \$10 to \$11 increase in their monthly electricity bill for the program's 100 percent renewable product, Sheehan said.

"It's significantly more green and renewable, and as a result, it will cost a little more," Sheehan said. 

Agencies Set to Engage Public on Forthcoming Plan Bay Area Draft

By Leslie Stewart

There are no engraved invitations, but organizers are hoping for a large turnout for this spring's big engagement events — namely, public comment opportunities following the release of the draft Plan Bay Area in March. Plan Bay Area, the region's most comprehensive transportation and land use plan ever, is being developed by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in partnership with two other regional agencies, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Open houses — both real-time and virtual — plus formal hearings, focus groups, and a telephone poll are on the calendar for this spring as the regional agencies take the next steps toward adoption of the final plan in June 2013.

The agencies have been partnering on this plan for almost three years. The process has already included intensive efforts to bring in stakeholders and members of the public to discuss policies and directions. According to Ellen Griffin, manager of public information at MTC, the input was often

very valuable. "For example, lots of people were interested in performance measures for the plan. Based on comments, we included benchmarks for health and safety in addition to other more traditional transportation and air quality metrics." The upcoming sessions will be different. "The visioning process was more about values and concepts, broader ideas of what people wanted their communities to look like," Griffin explained. "This time around we are seeking very specific comments focused on the draft plan."

Agency staffers are working to make the process for commenting on the draft plan as easy and comfortable as possible while complying with required formal hearings. For those who want to chime in online, the OneBayArea website (www.onebayarea.org) that serves as the plan's Internet home has been revised and will include a new "Bay Area Town Hall" section for users to read and comment on the plan. A telephone poll will also be used to reach out to members of the public with questions about key issues and proposals in

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Agencies Set to Engage Public (*from page 3*)

the plan.

To increase involvement of Bay Area residents who are in low-income communities or communities of color, MTC has partnered with community groups to conduct focus groups. Translations for people who aren't proficient in English and materials developed for various groups will make it easier for them to learn about and comment on the plan with other members of their communities. Griffin described this as "bringing the meeting to them."

The state law mandating the plan, Senate Bill 375, requires briefings with local elected officials in every county, and MTC and ABAG will coordinate with county congestion management agencies, which include elected officials from cities and from county boards of supervisors, to place the draft plan on their agendas for discussion and comment.

For the general public, there will also be a series of two-part events, one in each of the nine Bay Area counties. Each will begin with an open house with exhibits and plenty of opportunity to review the draft plan and ask questions. Displays will cover sections of the draft plan; for some topics, such as air quality, they will show how the draft plan is expected to perform in relation to targets that were set at the beginning of the process. This will be coupled with a "comment station" for those who do not have the time or desire to speak at the public hearing but still wish to offer comments. Forms for submitting handwritten comments will also be available as well.

The open houses will begin in the early evening, followed

by a formal public hearing the same evening. This will allow people to first learn more about the plan before speaking at the public hearing, or to leave their comments and go on to another evening activity.

All comments — whether from the website, open houses, or public hearings — will be incorporated into the formal record of public comments. Elected officials serving on both MTC and ABAG have requested a timely response to questions from the public hearings. In addition to recording comments and answers, Griffin said, "We will put the common themes and key messages that we've heard during the process before agency board members as they make their final decisions on Plan Bay Area."

Three additional hearings will be held around the region on the draft Environmental Impact Report. These hearings will be focused on the environmental impacts of the plan, not the draft plan itself.

As in previous public outreach efforts, the challenge will be to obtain truly representative feedback from the widely diverse Bay Area communities, including members of the public who may not otherwise be involved in planning decisions. Those who will be responsible for implementing the final plan — cities, counties and congestion management agencies, and regional agencies — need to be confident that Bay Area residents have had the opportunity to provide meaningful input into the plan and that the final product reflects the values and priorities of the region's residents. 

Taking Initiative: Clean Cities Grant Will Spark Alternative Fuels

By Chris Ingraham

Last November, the federal government's Department of Energy announced an aggressive "Clean Cities" initiative to expand transportation options and improve fuel efficiency in designated cities and states around the country. The \$11 million initiative has its eyes on the future, during a twenty-first century whose frightening ecological imperatives call on us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and to protect our air and water while fortifying the economy through lower fuel and transportation costs. The Department of Energy hopes that providing the funding to train workers and develop alternative fuel capabilities will prepare our increasingly populated country for the years ahead by reducing pollution and saving money and resources in places where these measures are needed most.

California is one such place. In December, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District accepted a \$1 million grant from

the Department of Energy as part of its Clean Cities initiative. The award is monetarily the largest of twenty such awards given around the nation. It follows on the heels of an earlier \$1 million federal award given to California in September 2011, intended to help the state prepare for anticipated growth in the popularity of plug-in electric vehicles. The South Coast Air Quality Management District took the lead on the earlier grant, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will take the lead on this one. But both projects are related and find various partners and coalitions around the state working together in what has become a two-part project focusing on alternative fuels.

While the earlier grant made it possible to plan for and prepare local governments, utilities, and other stakeholders for expansions to the infrastructure — hence the market — for plug-in electric vehicles around the state, the recently awarded

project will focus on similar goals for vehicles powered by hydrogen and natural gas. The project will also seek to expand the use of alternative fuel technologies (hydrogen, natural gas, and electric vehicles) in public and private fleets. The overall goal of this new “California Fleets and Workplace Alternative Fuels Project” is to reduce barriers to more widespread alternative fuel infrastructure and technologies throughout California. In addition to the two air districts, partners in the grant include the California Center for Sustainable Energy, the Plug-In Electric Vehicles Collaborative, several Advanced Transportation Technology and Energy Initiative centers around the state, as well as CALSTART, the California Fuel Cell Partnership, and thirteen clean city coalitions, all of which attest to the project’s robust multi-regional approach.

California has long been a bellwether in efforts to popularize alternative fuel technologies, to promote renewability, and to reduce emissions and associated air contaminants. In order to secure the award, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and its partners submitted a proposal for consideration by the Department of Energy in competition with dozens of related proposals around the country. The California proposal offered a plan specifically for supporting the deployment of hydrogen, electric vehicles and natural gas vehicles and technologies throughout the state, including a detailed budget for its implementation, as well as an explanation of the nature and makeup of the partnerships involved. The proposal also elaborated on how the work will be undertaken, along with a two-year timeline that included milestones showing where and how deliverables will be presented.

According to Damian Breen, director of strategic incentives at the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the accepted proposal will use its funding for two principal components: research and planning, and education and implementation. Different cities and counties throughout the state present a range of issues associated with how and to what extent they

permit alternative fuel infrastructure in their jurisdictions. Resolving these issues is perhaps the plan’s foremost goal, an aim that those involved hope to achieve by providing “best practices” workshops to employers and fleets, safety training

to first responders charged with monitoring alternative fuels infrastructure, and various other marketing and outreach efforts to the state’s employers and fleets to encourage and hurry along the adoption of environmentally and economically beneficial new transportation and fuel options. Such an agenda first requires determining what optimal practices and procedures have looked like elsewhere, say, when someone goes to a city planning commission wanting to open a hydrogen gas station, or in the event something goes awry

in alternative fuel technologies that require unique safety precautions and responses. Following such research, the plan hopes that educating cities, counties, and employers with guidelines for how best to implement, operate, and regulate alternative fueling centers and vehicles will then move the state closer to more widespread deployment of these technologies.

While the various regulatory councils across California’s cities and counties make obvious candidates to benefit from such education and training, the benefit to the state’s employers is less self-evident but no less important. The project particularly targets those employers that operate fleets of vehicles in carrying out their business, hoping to convince them of the advantages to be reaped by outfitting their employees or fleets with alternative fuel vehicles or incentives for the use thereof. In particular, the plan promotes the position that hydrogen and natural gas (along with plug-in electric vehicles promoted in the earlier and recently completed first part of the project) will offer economic and environmental benefits not to be rivaled by traditional transportation methods and fuels. To begin with, these alternative options will help

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Due to the recently-awarded Clean Cities initiative grant, California should see expansion of alternative fuel technologies, such as this compressed natural gas fueling station, shown with trucks funded by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

photo courtesy of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Taking Initiative (*from page 5*)

wean the country off its reliance on foreign oil, one of the motivating causes for the Department of Energy's Clean Cities initiative from the start. In turn, such technologies will boost the American and Californian economy by keeping fuel production and employment within our borders. That such fuels are far friendlier to the environment, producing fewer toxic air contaminants and greenhouse gases, is of course another undeniably valuable benefit.

In the end, Breen said the hope of the program is "to ensure as we roll forward that we can get these vehicles and fueling systems into the marketplace in a way that reduces the disruption to those who want to install them and maximizes their benefit to the environment." Look for the next few years to show a marked increase in alternative

fuel and transportation options on the roads around the state and in the Bay Area in particular. If you notice a change, the California Fleets and Workplace Alternative Fuels Project may be largely responsible. 

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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Permit to Emit: Revising the Rules for Expelling Air Pollution

By Alec MacDonald

Permits are required for all kinds of activities. You might need one when learning to drive, parking a car, or renovating a house. If you're staging a protest, carrying a firearm, or going fishing, you'd be wise to get one as well. And, in the unlikely case that you're planning to release a large volume of pollution into the atmosphere, you'll have to obtain a permit for that, too.

Of course this last example doesn't really apply to individual people, but covers large-scale industrial enterprise. In the Bay Area, thousands of facilities qualify, and the businesses that operate them must hold valid permits to stay in compliance with air quality regulations. Given the variety of pollutants all these facilities produce, managing the region's permitting process poses a difficult task.

The duty falls to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which carries out its permitting responsibilities by evaluating applications, inspecting facilities, and collecting fees. From time to time, it also sees fit to revise its permitting standards, and recently moved to tighten them in response to changes in federal requirements imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Early last year, the Air District invited an assortment of stakeholders to attend a set of workshops where it introduced proposed revisions to the standards. Representatives of commercial, environmental, and healthcare interests turned out to offer their perspectives, and an ensuing discussion stretched out over many months of meetings, document review, and public comment. Finally, on December 19, the Air District's board of directors adopted a thoroughly vetted set of permitting rule amendments that will affect a wide range of

facilities, from oil refineries and power plants to gas stations and dry cleaners.

The amendments make several finer points of a highly technical nature that might not mean very much to the average Bay Area resident. One notable exception, however, is the fact that the region's permitting rules now address greenhouse gases. Although these sorts of emissions have long drawn scrutiny for their global warming impact, authorities have nonetheless struggled to advance binding prohibitions that would limit them. Yet in modifications to the federal Clean Air Act in 2011, the EPA inserted greenhouse gases into its own permitting standards, paving the way for the Air District to include them in the December 19 amendments.

Of additional interest to the general public, the amendments contain new provisions regarding fine particulate matter, a common pollutant known to inflict serious harm on people's respiratory and cardiovascular systems. As with those for greenhouse gases, these new provisions derive from precedent set by the EPA (*for more on this, see "A Fine Line: Attaining Air Pollution Standards" in the October/November 2012 Monitor*).

Anyone who relishes digging deeper into complex policy can review the complete amendments on the Air District's website (www.baaqmd.gov). They should also be pleased to learn that the revised rules instill the permitting process with greater transparency, allowing the curious and the concerned to stay better apprised of future developments in this realm. In the ever-changing landscape of air quality regulation, those are sure to come. 

Help Preserve One of Our Most Precious Resources

By Gail Schickele

Note: This article supplements this year's Bay Area League Day, "Water: California's Gold 2013," hosted February 2 by the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area. For more information from the event, visit www.lwvbayarea.org.

Water conservation may be the single most important action that everyone can take to preserve one of our most precious resources. The key to sustainable water supply, water quality, and water security is directly tied to the efforts of individuals (as well as companies and other organizations). To begin doing your part, establish a baseline of your current water usage by checking



Attaching an aerator to a faucet is an easy way to save water.

photo by Alec MacDonald

your water records over a year's period, either from the past year or starting today. From this baseline, make a pledge to reduce your consumption by 20 percent, or as much as you're able, and try to decrease usage over time.

But what exactly can you do to use less water? The Association of California Water Agencies will tell you. This coalition of 450 California water agencies adopted "Save Our Water," a program to educate the public about acute challenges facing our supply and delivery system. Launched in partnership with the California Department of Water Resources in 2009, this conservation campaign is online at

www.saveourh2o.org, which features water-saving advice (as in the box at top right).

Here in the Bay Area, one ACWA member has been promoting the same conservation message. The East Bay Municipal Utility District provides drinking water for 1.3 million customers in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and engages in sustainable practices that "avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to the environment and the public."

START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT

For those still in search of a New Year's resolution, the Association of California Water Agencies suggests saving water, offering 10 conservation strategies for 2013:

- 1) Install a low-flow showerhead.
- 2) Shorten your shower from 10 minutes to five minutes.
- 3) Remember to turn your sprinklers off when it rains.
- 4) Run your dishwasher only when it's completely full.
- 5) Use mulch around your trees and plants. Mulch helps reduce evaporation.
- 6) Only fill the bathtub up halfway.
- 7) Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator to have cold water on demand instead of running the tap.
- 8) Replace water-hungry plants with water-wise plants around your yard.
- 9) Check your pipes and toilets for leaks.
- 10) Use a broom, not a hose, to clean your driveway and sidewalks.



EBMUD posts water saving tips at www.ebmud.com/environment/conservation-and-recycling/watersmart-center. Here you can learn to outfit your home with water-efficient faucets, dishwashers, clothes washers, toilets, and showers, as well as find out how to save water in the yard. There are also links to partnering and water efficiency organizations, as well as water-saving technologies, publications, and information on events and workshops.

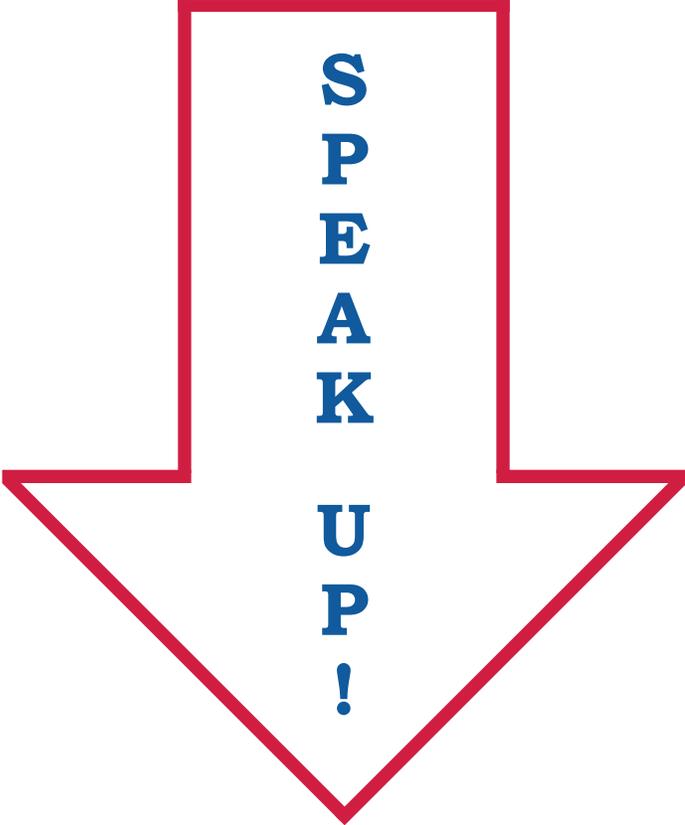
EBMUD, as most water agencies, offers incentives for smart water usage with rebates for both residential and commercial services, as well as free conservation items such as water-conserving showerheads, bathroom and kitchen faucet aerators, toilet low-flush bags, hose nozzles, and dye tablets to test for silent toilet leaks.

Check EBMUD's website, or call your local water agency (*listings below*) for more information. It's on all of us to help create a sustainable future that will assure the reliability of this precious resource, California's real gold: Water. 

LOCAL WATER AGENCIES IN THE BAY AREA

Alameda County Water District	(510) 668-4200	www.acwd.org
Contra Costa Water District	(925) 688-8000	www.ccwater.com
East Bay Municipal Utility District	(866) 403-2683	www.ebmud.com
Marin Municipal Water District	(415) 945-1455	www.marinwater.org
San Francisco PUC	(415) 554-3289	www.sfwater.org
Santa Clara Valley Water District	(408) 265-2600	www.valleywater.org
Solano County Water Agency	(707) 451-6090	www.scwa2.com
Sonoma County Water Agency	(707) 526-5370	www.scwa.ca.gov
Zone 7 Water Agency	(925) 454-5000	www.zone7water.com

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Every city councilmember, county supervisor, and state legislator in the Bay Area receives the *Monitor*, and it is sent to countless government staffers, business and nonprofit leaders, libraries, and League members. Endorsements from any and all of you will aid us as we spread planning and policy information on transportation, air quality, water quality, open space, and land use in the nine-county region.