

Climate Change? One Answer is Blowing in the Wind

Join the Climate and Clean Energy Committee

By Carole Mintzer



Five years ago, Alex and I spent a month in southwestern Australia which, among other things, is home to one of the [largest wind farms in Australia](#) that provides 80% of the power needs for the city of Albany (population 35,000). The first 12 windmills were operational in 2001, with 6 more windmills added in 2011. They can generate up to 35.4 MW of electricity.

A bit unique among wind farms is the walking trail amongst the 18 wind turbines, allowing visitors to get up close. The wind farm is right along the coast of the Southern Ocean, which has undoubtedly been responsible for more deaths than the wind turbines. I was surprised at the sound of the turbines – a steady, whooshing sound that was noticeable close up, but easily drowned out by the ocean as you moved a short distance away.

Alex has renewable energy on his mind.
Photos by Carole Mintzer.

With climate change proving to be as dangerous as predicted, and coming sooner than expected, we need to develop renewable energy to replace fossil fuels as quickly as possible. The Sierra Club recognizes this and supports responsibly-sited renewable energy projects. What does this mean? It means we will provide our input on projects to reduce their environmental impacts, while recognizing



that some impacts are inevitable and climate change will be even more devastating. Sierra Club's Executive Director, Ben Jealous, has recently published two articles in *Sierra Magazine*, that do a better job than I could of explaining why the Club supports wind energy. In a nutshell, there is a lot of [disinformation being promulgated](#) about wind energy and [clean energy is the future](#) for energy production and our economy.

Locally, the Santa Lucia Chapter has established a Climate and Clean Energy Committee that is focused on supporting renewable energy development in San Luis Obispo County. We are researching to learn all we can about the renewable energy projects planned for SLO County, preparing to comment on environmental impact statements when they become available, developing talking points about the benefits of renewable energy, and writing articles - like this one! I encourage you to join us - learn more and volunteer by contacting the [Climate and Clean Energy Committee](#). If Albany in Western Australia can generate significant amounts of wind energy to support their electricity needs, with our winds from the Pacific, so can we.