

COLAB

San Luis Obispo County



The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

**WEEKLY UPDATE
DECEMBER 18 - 24, 2022**



MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

THIS WEEK

NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
JANUARY 3, 2023 CEREMONIAL SWEARING-IN MEETING
JANUARY 10, 2023 FIRST REGULAR MEETING

OTHER AGENCIES ALL OFF FOR THE HOLIDAY RECESS

NEXT COLAB WEEKLY UPDATE - WEEK OF JANUARY 8-14, 2023

AND REMEMBER

*What's the spring-breathing jasmine and rose?
What's the summer with all its gay train
Or the splendour of autumn to those
Who've bartered their freedom for gain?*

*Let the love of our land's sacred rights
To the love of our people succeed
Let friendship and honour unite
And flourish on both sides the Tweed.*

*No sweetness the senses can cheer
Which corruption and bribery bind
No brightness that gloom can e'er clear
For honour's the sum of the mind*

*Let virtue distinguish the brave
Place riches in lowest degree
Think them poorest who can be a slave
Them richest who dare to be free¹*

LAST WEEK

1. Both Sides the Tweed - The traditional Scottish song (early version by Robert Burns) updated and made famous in 1979, by Richard Peter Gaughan. The song has become a Scottish independence anthem. The Tweed River separates England from Scotland.

BOS
ELECTION RESULTS DECLARED
AFTER MONTH LONG COUNT – GIBSON WINNER IN 2ND DISTRICT
LEFTISTS CONTINUE STATE DOMINATION

NEW DSA LABOR CONTRACT
PRETTY MUCH WITHIN BOS BUDGET POLICY

PLANNING DEPT PROJECT PRIORITIES FOR FY 2023-24
BOS DIRECTS STAFF TO WORK ON RURAL CAMPING,
FARMSTAYS, AND RELATED ISSUES

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION MEETINGS OF
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER
14, AND THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2022

3CE SPECIAL POLICY BOARD MEETING
NEW CEO APPOINTED

3CE AUTHORITY SPECIAL OPS BOARD MEETING
\$750 MILLION BATTERY STORAGE CONTRACT APPROVED
KEY CONTRACT PROVISIONS REDACTED FROM PUBLIC VIEW

LAFCO
AGAIN VERY LIGHT

EMERGENT ISSUES

PRETTY MUCH QUIET AT LOCAL LEVEL

FEDS AND STATE CONTINUE ASSUALT ON
MIDDLE CLASS, BORDERS, CULTURE, & SAFETY

COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 22

OUR PARASITIC GENERATION

Yes, there is a lot of ruin in great nations. But even America is by now running low on it.

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

THE LEFT'S ARGUMENT FOR SOCIALISM IS ENCAPSULATED IN THE ARTICLE BELOW WHILE WE DISAGREE WITH IT, YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THEIR ATTACK ON CIVILIZATION

**CAPITALISM FUELS THE CLIMATE CRISIS.
CAN IT ALSO OFFER SOLUTIONS?**

What if instead of replacing fossil fuels with renewable electricity, we should be focused on reducing our energy use as much as possible? What if the key to maintaining a stable climate — and protecting Earth's dwindling biodiversity — is accepting that our current lifestyles and consumption habits, at least in the developed world, are simply unsustainable?

BY SAMMY ROTH



THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

No Board of Supervisors meeting or meetings of other Regional agencies scheduled due to the Christmas/New Year's recess. Most will be back starting with the week of January 8-14, 2023.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, December 13, 2022 (Completed)

Item 13 - It is recommended that the Board declare the results of the November 8, 2022, Consolidated General Election. The Board certified the election on a vote of 4/1 with Supervisor Arnold dissenting. A private citizen has filed for a recount in the 2nd District Supervisorial race, in which incumbent Supervisor Bruce Gibson maintains a 13-vote lead.

The report from the Clerk Recorder stated in part:

All in-person, vote-by-mail, and provisional ballots have been counted and the official canvass has been completed. The County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters has certified the election and signed the Certification of County Clerk Recorder/Registrar of Voters of the Results of the Canvass. The Summary Report of Final Official Election Results and Statement of Votes Cast is available on the Clerk-Recorder website as well as the Clerk's File. Pursuant to Elections Code 15400, "The governing body shall declare elected or nominated to each office voted on at each election under its jurisdiction the person having the highest number of votes for that office, or who was elected or nominated under the exceptions noted in Section 15452. The governing board shall also declare the results of each election under its jurisdiction as to each measure voted on at the election."

With a 13-vote margin, a 7-vote swing could change the result.

Item 20 - Submittal of a resolution approving 1) the January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2025, Memorandum of Understanding between the County of San Luis Obispo and the Deputy Sheriffs' Association. The new contract was approved unanimously,

The costs appear to be within the County's overall budget policy for raises and benefits (about 2.5% per year).

The Deputy Sheriffs' Association (DSA) currently represents a total of 178 employees and is comprised of the following bargaining units (BU): BU03 - Law Enforcement Unit, BU21 - Non-Safety Law Enforcement Unit, BU22 - Dispatcher Unit, and BU14 - Supervisory Law Enforcement Unit. There is one Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for BU03, BU21, and BU22, and a separate MOU for BU14

A number of written contract provisions increase the benefits offset, add money for clothing, increase shift differential pay, and provide other perks.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The increased costs associated with the provisions of these new MOUs are estimated as follows:

	Fiscal Year 2022-23	Fiscal Year 2023-24	Fiscal Year 2024-25	Annual Ongoing
Wages	\$326,560	\$683,486	\$1,260,413	\$1,260,413
Healthcare	\$66,540	\$180,180	\$270,330	\$313,380
Pension	\$110,209	\$222,979	\$225,541	\$225,541
Bilingual Differential	\$10,485	\$20,970	\$20,970	\$20,970
Career Incentive Allowance	\$64,800	\$129,600	\$129,600	\$129,600
Safety Equipment Allowance	\$53,050	\$23,600	\$23,600	\$23,600
Special Assignment Pays	\$17,895	\$35,790	\$35,790	\$35,790
Uniform	\$9,950	\$16,900	\$16,900	\$16,900
Shift Differential	\$149,680	\$302,839	\$313,278	\$313,278
Total Costs	\$809,169	\$1,616,344	\$2,296,422	\$2,339,472

Supplemental Agenda Item 4 - Request to receive and file a report on Board-identified priority projects for the Department of Planning and Building and provide staff direction, as necessary. The Board had a lengthy discussion. It ultimately directed staff to attempt to squeeze in some of their priority projects within the existing staff and budget resources. The Board is particularly interested in straightening out friction involving rural camping, harvest host stays, and the Code Enforcement Division’s sudden crackdown on agricultural event venues.

Background: The discussion and possible Board direction commences the annual discussion of those projects on which the Planning and Building Department’s Long Range Planning Division (about 8 planners) should be working. This is a priority setting process by which the Board determines which ones to select. These include State mandated changes to Plans and Ordinances, requests by the Board for new or revised plans and regulations, and requests from the public for changes and additions. Feasibility projects that may involve other departments are also included. A recent example is the Paso Basin Water Moratorium amendments revisions, which constituted a very substantial amount of work.

There is always more work than the current staffing can handle. Several tables provided by staff illustrate the current status and potential work. A quick look will provide the reader with a basic understanding of the pending choices.

Table 1 - Long Range Planning - Staffing Levels

Classification	Allocated¹	Filled	Vacant
Supervising Planner	1.0	1.0	0.0
Senior Planner	2.0	1.0	1.0
Planner I/II/III	3.5	3.5	0.0
Limited Term Planner I/II/III ²	1.0	0.0	1.0
Total	7.5	5.5	2.0

¹The term “Allocated” refers to filled and vacant positions on the Department’s Position Allocation List (PAL).

²Allocated to administering the County’s water conservation programs through 12/31/24.

Table 2: 18-Month Long Range Planning Work Program

Workload Type	FTE Allocated and Vacancy Status			Timeframe and Workload Capacity						Est. Completion Date
	FTEs			FY 22-23		FY 23-24				
	Allocated	Filled	Vacant	Q3 ¹	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Mandatory Workload	5.00	3.75	1.25	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	
Applicant-Submitted GPAs	1.25	1.00	0.25							Ongoing
Applicant-Submitted Specific Plans	1.25	1.25	0.00							Ongoing
Growth Management Ordinance	0.25	0.25	0.00							Ongoing
Housing Policy and Homeless Division Support	0.50	0.00	0.50							Ongoing
Water Conservation Programs	1.00	0.75	0.25							Ongoing
Williamson Act Program	0.50	0.50	0.00							Ongoing
Tracking and Implementing State Law	0.25	0.00	0.25							Ongoing
Discretionary Workload	2.50	1.50	1.00	1.50	2.50	2.25	2.25	1.25	1.25	
Community Plans - Major	1.25	1.25	0.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	
<i>Avila Community Plan</i>										FY 24-25 Q4
<i>Los Osos Community Plan LCP and HCP</i>										FY 23-24, Q3
LCP Amendments - Minor	0.125	0.125	0.00	0.125	0.125					
<i>ADU Ordinance</i>										FY 22-23 Q4
<i>Density Bonus Ordinance</i>										FY 22-23 Q4
<i>Agricultural Worker Housing Ordinance</i>										FY 22-23 Q4
Housing Element Implementation	0.125	0.125	0.00	0.125	0.125					
<i>ADU Pre-approved Plans</i>										FY 22-23 Q4
2023 Minor Ordinance Amendment Package	1.00	0.00	1.00		1.00	1.00	1.00			
<i>Craft Distilleries Ord.</i>										FY 23-24 Q2
<i>AR Combining Designation</i>										FY 23-24 Q2
<i>MRA Combining Designation</i>										FY 23-24 Q2
<i>Cannabis Ord. - 5 Years at Operations</i>										FY 23-24 Q2
Filled Staff Positions (FTEs)	7.50	5.25	2.25	5.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	
Total FTE Workload				6.50	7.50	7.25	7.25	6.25	6.25	
Total FTE Available				-1.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	1.25	1.25	

¹ This work program assumes the Department will fill its 2.0 vacant Long Range planner positions by March 31, 2023. The Department is currently relying on consultant assistance to balance workload in the short term as the Department hires, onboards, and trains new staff.

Table 3: Potential New Long Range Planning Projects

Potential New Long Range Planning Project	FTEs Total	Staff Cost	Professional Services	Total Cost	Timeline (Months) ¹
Major Ordinance Amendments					
Brick and Mortar Dispensaries	1.00	\$194,832	\$0	\$194,832	12 – 18
Rural Camping Ordinance	1.50	\$576,649	\$50,000 – 500,000 ²	\$626,649 - \$1,076,649	18 – 24 ²
Minor Ordinance Amendments					
Dark Skies Ordinance	0.33	\$46,224	\$0	\$46,224	6 – 9
Guest Ranch to Dude Ranch	0.33	\$61,632	\$0	\$61,632	9 – 12
RV Storage in Rural and Agricultural Areas	0.33	\$46,224	\$0	\$46,224	6 – 9
Small Urban Wineries	0.33	\$46,224	\$0	\$46,224	6 – 9
Other Land Use Initiatives					
Completing Vacation Rental Nexus Study	0.25	\$37,872	\$70,000	\$107,872	6 – 9
Harvest Host RV Stays	0.125	\$8,242	\$0	\$8,242	3 – 4
Phillips 66 Refinery Feasibility Study	1.50	\$432,487	\$200,000	\$632,487	12 – 18

¹Number of months to complete project after resources are allocated.

²The cost and timeline range for the Rural Camping Ordinance depends on the necessary level of environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The low end of the range assumes a mitigated negative declaration and the high end assumes an environmental impact report.

Each year the Board agonizes over these choices. The Land Use Planning Division of the Department has about 22 employees, of which the seven assigned to these projects are presumably included. The full budget for the division is about \$3.9 million. The rest of the 22 are not available to work on these projects, as they are assigned to economic development work, GIS, federally funded work, and so forth. Note that we cannot be precise, as the County does not budget at the program level. Thus is not possible to determine the exact deployment.

**3CE Authority Special Policy Board Meeting of Wednesday, December 14, 2022
(Scheduled) 9:00 AM**

As of 10:00 AM on Saturday, December 10, 2022, no agenda or material had been posted on the Authority website. It was not posted by 9:00 AM Sunday morning, which resulted in the meeting being illegal, as it violated the 72-hour advance posting requirement. As of 10:00 AM Sunday, there was no posting. Nevertheless, the Policy Board met and appointed the current Operating Officer, Robert M Shaw, as the new CEO. The report out of closed session stated in part:

Mr. Shaw was determined to be the most qualified candidate to succeed Mr. Habashi as CEO and ensure the continued success of CCCE as a transformative and innovative leader in decarbonization, renewable energy deployment, and electrification programs.

Mr. Shaw is currently serving in the Chief Operating Officer role for Central Coast Community Energy and has twenty years of experience serving public entities, including five with Central Coast Community Energy. In his time with Central Coast Community Energy, Mr. Shaw has helped lead CCCE through the most volatile energy markets in 20 years while still expanding engagement in CCCE's innovative and impactful electrification programs. Mr. Shaw's leadership in various roles at CCCE has helped build the agency as a standard-bearer for CCAs in California. Upon approval, Mr. Shaw will be installed as Chief Executive Officer 30 days before Mr. Habashi's last day to ensure a period of overlap and formal handoff. The agreement is for an initial five-year term. The terms and conditions of the proposed employment agreement are comparable to other CEO positions within the Community Choice Aggregators: East Bay Community Energy, Marin Clean Energy, Peninsula Clean Energy, Sonoma Clean Power, and Silicon Valley Clean Energy.

Key terms of the agreement include:

- *Annual compensation of \$400,000, adjusted annually for inflation*
- *With a positive first year evaluation, annual compensation shall adjust to an average of the compensation to the CEOs of East Bay Community Energy, Marin Clean Energy, Peninsula Clean Energy, Sonoma Clean Power, and Silicon Valley Clean Energy*
- *A year of severance if terminated without cause*
- *Benefits mirror those reflected in the current CEO contract, including:*
 - o *240 hours of paid time off ("PTO") annually (2-year maximum accrual)*
 - o *40 hours of executive leave annually (no carryover)*

o Holidays, medical insurance, 10% retirement match into 401(a)/457(b), and other benefits available to other CCCE employees FISCAL IMPACT: The FY 22/23 fiscal impact associated with the proposed Agreement has been approved as part of the FY 22/23 Operating Budget.

Future impacts will be reflected in the annual proposed Operating Budget.

CONCLUSION: The Policy Board's approval of the Agreement installs Robert. M. Shaw as CCCE's next Chief Executive Officer effective 30 days prior to Mr. Habashi's last day and ensures CCCE is well positioned for a seamless transition that continues CCCE's position as the leading CCA in California

Given the apparent SLO County new Board majority, it is likely that the County will join 3CE.

Several years ago when we asked Shaw why certain vital information was blacked out on a proposed contract for hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of energy, Shaw (who was the Authority's Chief Legal Counsel at the time) said that it was confidential as a protected trade secret. We filed a formal public information request:

Robert M. Shaw, General Counsel Monterey Bay Community Power 70 Garden Court, Suite 300 Monterey, CA 93940 (By Email)

Dear Mr. Shaw:

In your September 20, 2019 response to my request for energy source and cost information you have redacted the essential data which is of compelling interest to the public and elected officials when their city or county is considering joining MBCP and/or understating its operations as citizens and customers.

Specifically, you have blacked out portions of an existing table in your possession showing the amount of contracted energy and the cost of the contracted energy by provider. You further indicate that the information is protected under sections 6254.k and 6255 and of the California Government Code and the California Evidence Code, 1060 as relating to trade secrets which are necessary to allow MBCP to negotiate fair pricing etc. per the quote below:

MBCP has redacted expected energy quantities and contract pricing as maintaining the confidential nature of such information is both (1) critical to enabling MBCP to negotiate fair market pricing for energy on the open market on behalf of its customers, and (2) reflective of MBCP's method and process for contracting that meets the definition of a protected trade secret. Determinations regarding application of particular

This might be a supportable argument during the bidding phase of acquiring power. The bid prices and other terms would not be disclosed publicly to protect the integrity of the bidding process. But once the successful bidders have been selected and contracts signed, how would disclosure of the results interfere with MBCP's ability to negotiate fair market pricing in the future?

Evidence Code 1060 appears to be a section which pertains to trade secrets which might be disclosed during trials and does not appear to be on point here. Also, the cited Government Code provisions need to be read in conjunction with the Public Utilities Code Section 34261d. below:

The Public Utilities Code defines trade secrets as:

) "Trade secret" means information, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process, that:
(1) Derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to the public or to other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use; and
(2) Is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

3426.1d

What independent economic value would be derived by the public, "competing" power companies, energy brokers, or anyone else from data about MBCP's existing power contracts? How would this information harm MBCP's to negotiate fair pricing? MBCP is not a competitor with other utilities and works as a partner with them. As a not-for-profit government owned non-competitor, how could it have trade secrets?

It is a tried-and-true principle of economics that broad knowledge of prices by suppliers and customers tends to drive prices down.

MBCP is a government entity set up to buy and distribute CO₂ free and renewable electric power at costs below what is being offered by investor-owned utilities. It seems unconscionable that the public and customers are debarred from data about the suppliers' charges for power to their local CCA.

Sincerely,

Mike Brown, Government Affairs Director – COLAB of San Luis Obispo County

When we attempted to follow up by telephone, Shaw listened for a minute and then hung up.

Fast forward to this year, and the Orange County Board of Supervisors has the same questions for the Orange County Power Authority (their equivalent of 3CE).

Last week, Orange County news media reported:

Bombshell County Audit Calls Out OC's Green Power Agency

BY NOAH BIESIADA Dec 13, 2022

A scathing new audit obtained by Voice of OC is calling out the Orange County Power Authority, saying the agency's staff failed to follow best practices, lacked expertise, failed to inform the public and has seen almost three times the statewide average number of customers opt out.

The report was written in part by Paul Fenn, who co-authored the first ever laws in the country for community choice energy programs and was the sole author of California's laws that govern green power agencies like the Power Authority.

To review the full report, [click here](#).

In a statement released Tuesday morning, power authority staff said they were reviewing the report and would "provide context, clarity and correct any misinformation in the findings."

"No other California (community choice energy program) has faced the likes of the political misinformation campaigns that have been waged against OCPA," staff wrote. "We encourage customers to get the facts and decide whether community choice energy is right for them."

To read the full statement, [click here](#).

Agency CEO Brian Probolsky and chair of the board Mike Carroll did not respond to requests for comment on Monday evening.

The report was commissioned by county supervisors in August when they were weighing exiting the power authority, following up on a grand jury report titled "Orange County Power Authority: Come Clean."

[[Read: County Demands Investigation of OC's New Green Power Agency, Under Threat of Withdrawing](#)]

In addition to the county, the cities of Irvine, Huntington Beach, Fullerton and Buena Park are members of the agency.

The grand jury report credited reporting from the Voice of OC as one of the reasons they started looking at the agency's operations, and said they found a concerning lack of transparency and inexperience among staff.

To review the grand jury report, [click here](#).

"The real issue here is that there is some trust broken. There is a community concern that it was not working the way it was intended to work," said Supervisor Katrina Foley at the August meeting when she called on the audit, saying they'd make a decision on whether or not to stay in once they saw the results.

In a phone call Tuesday morning, Foley said she was “very concerned,” about the audit.

“It exposed what we think is a poorly operated and dysfunctional power authority that’s not serving the best interests of the community,” Foley said. “I do not have confidence in the leadership over there.”

The report was compiled “from late September to mid-November,” and paints a grim picture on the agency’s operations after reviewing agency records and 25 interviews with “OCA staff, Board members and other participants.”

Auditors were not allowed to review un-redacted copies of the power purchasing contracts agency leaders had signed, and specifically noted the pricing was part of the information redacted.

Board Members Unable To Review Spending

According to the report, even the agency’s board members who approved the contracts weren’t able to review the price they were paying for electricity.

While the agency’s legal counsel claimed that all board members were provided with secure hyperlinks that gave them the chance to review records, some board members claim that’s not true in the report.

“Other board members did not recall ever seeing the links and claimed to have never had opportunities to view unredacted power contracts,” auditors stated in the report.

Those contracts are some of the biggest expenditures the agency has made, but under state law the details on pricing are kept confidential, with only rough estimates provided to the public.

In September, while objecting to the grand jury report calling them non-transparent, the board of the agency approved over \$200 million in power purchases with almost no public discussion.

[Read: [OC Power Authority Disputes Accusations of Secrecy, Completes \\$200 Million in Power Purchases](#)]

Failure to Inform the Public

Nearly a quarter of the report focused on how the agency failed to effectively inform the public of the power authority's mission, despite every resident in the participating cities being automatically opted in.

While the agency sent out mailers notifying customers of the change, auditors found those mailers contained almost no information.

“There is no information about rates or renewable levels, nor about the default premium product and impending rate increase,” auditors wrote. “The required information about how to opt out is given in small print in the corner and includes confusing information about the negative consequences of opting out.”

To review a copy of the flier, [click here](#).

[Read: [OC Businesses and Public Agencies Left in the Dark As Power Authority Rolls Out](#)]

They also pointed out how the website set up for residents was much less efficient than similar websites from other community choice energy programs, burying the information in a complicated process.

“Best practice is no layers; the rate page, alone, should display enough information for customers to make informed decisions about joining,” auditors wrote. “Inadequate communication with customers may have harmed OCPA's public credibility.”

That damage to credibility was also listed as one of the possible reasons for why the agency has seen one of the highest opt-out rates in the state, with over double the expected customers opting out according to the report.

“Just halfway through OCPA's residential opt-out process, its current opt-out rate is already significantly higher than the average.”

AUDITORS

Auditors also wrote that the higher level of opt-outs could lead to potential issues or outright failure of the agency as the program generates less revenue than projected, but said that was a “worst-case” scenario that OCPA staff claimed was unlikely.

The report also criticized the Community Advisory Committee, the primary resident group set up to inform the board, as effectively defunct, as it has no way to report to the board without going through the CEO.

“The OCPA (Community Advisory Committee) as created lacks a mandate to independently influence the Board or staff and has no independent way to communicate with the board,” auditors wrote. “Though formed to advise OCPA’s Board, (the committee) is substantively under staff control when it should be independent.”

Auditors Say Staff Lack Relevant Experience

Another major complaint brought up by the auditors was the inexperienced staff inside the agency.

The one hire praised in the report was Chief Financial Officer Tiffany Law, who was hired in 2021, but there were multiple concerns about the past staffing of the agency and its current staff.

“Other staff, however, do not have the level of expertise needed to manage electricity procurement and energy activities,” auditors wrote. “These gaps present continuing under-managed risks for participating consumers.”

The report also singled out CEO Brian Probolsky, whose lack of experience in the electricity industry has been a source of concern since he was hired at the end of 2020.

But auditors also pointed out that his role as the Secretary of the board meetings has created some issues, and that it’s not a best practice for the CEO to both run the meeting and serve as secretary.

“There was irregular coverage of Board meeting minutes – some meetings are highly detailed while others are de minimis, omitting or cursorily summarizing comments, questions or requests by members of the public,” auditors wrote.

Board members also raised complaints that staff ignored their requests for a public discussion on multiple issues.

“Failure of staff to follow through on Board requests or directives could be harmful to the integrity of the board as it attempts to make decisions concerning the public,” auditors wrote.

What's Next?

While the county has now released a report, there are still ongoing audits from the state auditor and the city of Irvine, whose leaders kicked in the starting cash for the agency.

County supervisors Lisa Bartlett and Doug Chaffee had already asked to discuss leaving the agency before the release of the report, and supervisors are set to make the decision at their meeting on Dec. 20.

The board of the power authority meets today at 10 a.m., and their meeting can be [viewed here](#).

Noah Biesiada is a Voice of OC reporter and corps member with Report for America, a Groundtruth initiative. Contact him at nbiesiada@voiceofoc.org or on Twitter @NBiesiada.

See the related article, below, where the 3CE Operations Board just approved a \$750 million battery power contract in which entire pages and key information are redacted.

**3CE Authority Special Operations Board Meeting of Wednesday, December 14, 2022
(Scheduled) 1:00 PM**

Similarly, no information was posted as of 10:00 AM on Saturday December 10, 2022. It was not posted prior to 1:00 PM on Sunday. The meeting notice did not meet the 72-hour open meeting noticing requirement. Nevertheless, the Operations Board approved a \$750 million dollar battery storage contract, which is full of redacted (blacked out) sections. See Agenda **Item 4** below for some samples:

Item 4: Approve and Authorize the CEO to Execute an Energy Storage Agreement with Gem A-CAES LLC, and any necessary ancillary documents, with a Term of 25 Years in an Amount Not to Exceed \$775,000,000. (Action Item). The Board approved the contract, which is actually for renewable energy certificates (RECS) that represent the use of battery stored energy which is pumped into the grid.

3. 4 b 5 No Electrical Output. *Neither the purchase of the Product nor the Energy Settlement confers to Buyer any right to the electrical output or Energy from the Facility. Rather, the Product confers the right to include the Storage Contract Capacity in its Compliance Showings. The Energy Settlement confers the right for Buyer to receive payments regardless of whether the Facility is charged or discharged. Specifically, no Energy or ancillary services associated with the Facility are required to be made available to Buyer, and Buyer shall not be responsible for compensating Seller for Seller's commitments to the CAISO required by this Agreement. Seller*

retains the right to sell any Capacity Attributes from the Facility other than those Capacity Attributes required for the Product.

In other words, 3CE’s customers will receive the exact mix of energy distributed by PG&E (mainly from natural gas, nuclear, large hydro, and some solar during the day).

Project Summary

Counterparty	Gem A-CAES LLC
Parent Company	Hydrostor
Product	Energy Storage Contract Capacity (Resource Adequacy Benefits) and Energy Revenue Sharing.
Delivery Term	25 years June 1, 2028, through May 31, 2053 With potential for accelerated construction schedule to be online by June 1, 2025, in lieu of providing bridging/replacement capacity.
Project Name	Willow Rock Energy Storage Center
Contract Capacity	200 MW/ 1,600 MWh Energy Storage Technology: Advanced-Compressed Air Energy Storage (A-CAES) 8-hour Discharge Duration
Location	Kern County
Not to Exceed Amount (\$,000)	\$775,000

Some samples of redacted sections include:

3.4 Changes in Law as Related to Contract Net Qualifying Capacity.

(a) Seller’s maximum, aggregate liability [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (the “**Compliance Costs**”) arising due to a change in Law occurring after the Effective Date [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (the “**Compliance Expenditure Cap**”) except to the extent that additional Compliance Costs are incurred prior to termination of this Agreement pursuant to Section 3.4(b). If Seller reasonably anticipates that the Compliance Expenditure Cap will be exceeded or the Compliance Expenditure Cap is exceeded, Seller may provide Notice to Buyer of such anticipated or actual Compliance Costs, which shall be accompanied by written documentation reasonably establishing the anticipated or actual Compliance Costs; provided that any such Notice must be delivered by Seller within twenty-four (24) months following the date the actual Compliance Costs exceed the compliance Expenditure Cap.

4. If Seller does not achieve Commercial Operation by the Guaranteed Commercial Operation Date, as it may be extended as provided herein, Seller shall pay COD Delay Damages to Buyer for each day after the Guaranteed Commercial Operation Date until the Commercial Operation Date [REDACTED] and shall be paid to Buyer in advance on a monthly basis. A prorated amount will be returned to Seller if COD is achieved during the month for which COD Delay Damages were paid in advance. The Parties agree that Buyer's receipt of COD Delay Damages shall be Buyer's sole and exclusive remedy for Seller's failure to achieve the Commercial Operation Date on or before the Guaranteed Commercial Operation Date, but shall (x) not be construed as Buyer's declaration that an Event of Default has occurred under any provision of Section 11.1 of the Agreement and (y) not limit Buyer's right to receive a Damage Payment upon exercise of Buyer's default right pursuant to Section 11.2 of the Agreement.

5. **Failure to Reach Storage Contract Capacity.** If, at Commercial Operation, the Installed Capacity is less than one hundred percent (100%) of the Storage Contract Capacity, Seller shall have one hundred twenty (120) days after the Commercial Operation Date to install additional capacity or otherwise modify the Facility such that the Installed Capacity is equal to (but not greater than) one hundred percent (100%) of the Storage Contract Capacity, and Seller shall provide to Buyer a new certificate substantially in the form attached as Exhibit G hereto specifying the new Installed Capacity. If Seller fails to construct the Storage Contract Capacity by such date, Seller shall pay Capacity Damages to Buyer, in an amount equal to [REDACTED] for each MW that the Storage Contract Capacity exceeds the Installed Capacity, and the Storage Contract Capacity and other applicable portions of the Agreement shall be adjusted accordingly.

More on the next page:

**Local Agency Formation Commission Meeting of Thursday, December 17, 2022
(Completed)**

No Substantial Policy Items on this agenda. There were no annexations, detachments, or other major issues on this very short agenda.

California Coastal Commission Meetings of Tuesday, December 13, Wednesday, December 14, and Thursday December, 15, 2022 (Completed)

No Major Policy Issues Impacting San Luis Obispo County on this agenda.

Th.18.a - Appeal by Tarren Collins and Erik Howell of City of Pismo Beach approval of a coastal permit for demolition of a 1,340 sq., one-story, single-family home and construction of a new 3,648 sq., two-story, single-family home at 171 Naomi Avenue, in the St. Andrews neighborhood of the City's Shell Beach area, upcoast of downtown, in Pismo Beach.

One item of interest was an appeal by Erik Howell (a former Pismo City Councilman and Coastal Commissioner) of a single-family home. The staff recommended that the Commission decline to hear the appeal on the grounds that the project meets all requirements. The Commission agreed and determined that there are no substantial coastal issues.

Apparently, the appellants feel the house is too big for the neighborhood.

The matter was controversial when it was before the Pismo Beach City Council.



From a larger policy perspective, it is amazing that a state-wide Commission is empowered to regulate single family homes in zoned cities.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - Local Level Quiet. The approaching Christmas/New Year's holiday season has created a drop off in activity. It is expected that matters will heat up after the first week in January.

Item 2 - Federal.

a. Southern Border to become more porous as Title 42 expires. Title 42 is a public health order that allows Customs and Border Protection to expel migrants to Mexico or back to their home countries to prevent the spread of the virus in holding facilities.

2022 CE - Refugees from all over the world are permitted to cross the Rio Grande by President Biden and the Congress.



376 CE - Germans are permitted to cross the Danube by Emperor Valens.



In 378 the Gothic immigrants revolted and Valens was killed in the battle of Adrianople. Reports from the time state in part: *When Fritigern and his Goths, to the number of 200,000 warriors and almost a million all told, crossed the Danube, Valens's mobile forces were tied down in the east, on the Persian frontier (Valens was attempting to withdraw from the harsh terms imposed by Shapur and was meeting some resistance on the latter's part). This meant that only limitanei units were present to oversee the Goths' settlement.*

A German bribes a Roman Bureaucrat (or perhaps sells him his oldest daughter).

The small number of imperial troops present prevented the Romans from stopping a Danube crossing by a group of [Ostrogoths](#) and yet later on by [Huns](#) and [Alans](#). What started out as a controlled resettlement might any moment turn into a major invasion. But the situation was worsened by corruption in the Roman administration, as Valens' generals accepted bribes rather than depriving the Goths of their weapons as Valens had stipulated and then proceeded to enrage them by such exorbitant prices for food that they were soon driven to the last extremity.^[48] Meanwhile, the Romans failed to prevent the crossing of other barbarians who were not included in the treaty.^[49] In early 377 the Goths revolted after a commotion with the people of [Marcianopolis](#), and defeated the corrupt Roman governor [Lupicinus](#) near the city at the [Battle of Marcianople](#).^[50]²

The story seems all too familiar.

b. US slipping towards war with Russia

The Russian Embassy to the United States has condemned the possible shipment of long-range Patriot air defense systems to Ukraine by the US, saying that the move would be a provocative step. Taken from Defcon Level Warning System: <https://www.defconlevel.com/current-level.php>

The US is currently deciding on whether to send a Patriot long-range missile system to Ukraine, after receiving a request from Ukraine for more powerful and longer-range missile systems. Taken from Defcon Level Warning System: <https://www.defconlevel.com/current-level.php>

Poland To Deploy German Patriot Missile Systems On Border With Ukraine - Polish President Andrzej Duda announced on Monday that Poland will be working with Germany to deploy German Patriot missile systems on its border with Ukraine in the coming days. Taken from Defcon Level Warning System: <https://www.defconlevel.com/current-level.php>

Belarusian army says that they have deployed tactical battalion groups on the borders between Belarus and the countries where NATO had deployed forces. Skies above Belarus Empty Taken from Defcon Level Warning System: <https://www.defconlevel.com/current-level.php>

Russia is massing men and arms for a new offensive. As soon as January, but more likely in the spring, it could launch a big attack from Donbas in the east, from the south or even from Belarus, a puppet state in the north. Russian troops will aim to drive back [Ukrainian forces](#) and could even stage a second attempt to take Kyiv, the capital.

Item 3 - State of California.

a. Reparations Panel recommends \$350,000 payments to California resident descendants of slaves. The operative and financial aspects of implementation are not so clear.

The [Globe reported](#) Gov. Gavin Newsom's [Reparations Task Force](#) is considering an [estimated \\$569 billion to be paid by the state for reparations](#) (that's two and a half times California's current state budget which already is running a deficit) to give to black-Americans living in

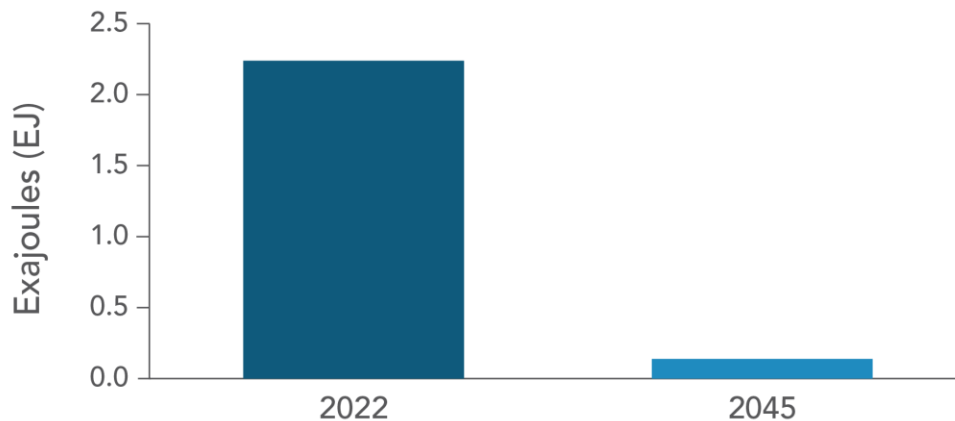
² Ammianus Marcellinus (occasionally [anglicised](#) as Ammian^[112]) (born c. 330, died c. 391 – 400) was a [Roman soldier](#) and [historian](#) who wrote the penultimate major historical account surviving from [antiquity](#) (preceding [Procopius](#)). His work, known as the *Res Gestae*, chronicled in Latin the [history of Rome](#) from the accession of the Emperor [Nerva](#) in 96 to the death of [Valens](#) at the [Battle of Adrianople](#) in 378, although only the sections covering the period 353 to 378 survive.

California for past discriminatory practices and slavery, despite that California was never a slave state. Some of the recent proposals were simply cash payouts of \$350,000 to every African American and \$250,000 for every black-owned business to help close the “racial wealth gap,” which is actually a social justice grievance, and not slavery.

Then what?

b. California Air Resources Board (CARB) approves unprecedented climate action plan to shift world’s 4th largest economy from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy.

Dramatic Reductions in Fossil Fuel Demand: 94% Reduction in Liquid Petroleum



COLAB IN DEPTH

IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES

OUR PARASITIC GENERATION

Yes, there is a lot of ruin in great nations. But even America is by now running low on it.

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

"Be assured young friend, that there is a great deal of ruin in a nation."
— Adam Smith

Are we sure that there is all that much ruin left in the United States?

We are \$31 trillion in collective debt. The new normal is \$1.5 trillion budget deficits. The military is politicized and short of recruits. We trade lethal terrorists for woke celebrity athletes as if to confirm our enemies' cynical stereotypes.

Our FBI is corrupt and discredited, collaborating with Silicon Valley contractors to suppress free speech and warp elections. We practice segregation and racial discrimination and claim we do not because the right and good people support it and, anyway, the victims deserve it. The country has seen defeat before but never abject, deliberate humiliation as in Kabul, when we fled and abandoned to the terrorist Taliban a \$1 billion embassy, a huge, remodeled air base, thousands of friends, and tens of billions of dollars in military hardware—and hard-earned deterrence.

We are witnessing the breakdown of basic norms essential for civilized life, from affordable food and fuel to available key antibiotics and baby formula. Old Cairo seems safer than an after-hours subway ride or stroll at dusk in many major American cities. Medieval London's roadways were likely cleaner than Market Street in San Francisco. Speech was freer in 1920s America than it is now.

The Breakdown of Basic Society

Our California always is a preamble to America's future. Our present is likely your tomorrow.

Each summer here we impotently expect forest conflagrations. Millions of acres of flames pour more millions of tons of smoke and carbon and soot in the skies. Tens of millions of hated combustion engines cannot begin to match the natural blankets of aerial dirt.

The state seems to shrug it off, saying wildfires are both inevitable and natural. Old-fashioned forest management and fire-fighting strategies, honed over centuries, are deemed obsolete by our green experts. So, we let fiery nature take its better course. What is the implicit message to those in the way of fires that devour homes and trees? Nature's way? Natural wood mulch? Or that such fools should not build their cabins or homes where they are *not wanted*?

What was bequeathed to us from a state of 15 million—magnificent aqueducts, once brilliantly designed freeways and airports, superb universities and schools, perfectly engineered reservoirs, and downtowns of majestic skyscrapers—in a California of 41 million are frozen in amber or in decay. They have few updates and even fewer replacements. The decrepitude recalls the weedy forums and choked fountains of Vandal-era Roman cities, which is what happens when a later parasitic generation mocks but still consumes what it inherits but cannot create.

Our own generation's pale contributions are multibillion-dollar, quarter-built, graffiti-defaced high-speed rail Stonehenge monoliths. We prefer to shut down rather than build nuclear plants. Our solar battery plants are as prone to combust as they are to store electricity. And our urban streets reek of feces. All seem testaments to our incompetence, arrogance, and ignorance. We

fear the idea of homelessness, and so cede to the homeless our downtowns and avoid what follows.

Our great universities, once the most esteemed in the world from Berkeley and Stanford to UCLA and USC, grow burdened with commissars, too many of their outnumbered faculties are weaponized, and their students have never been more confident in their abilities, and with so little reason for that confidence.

A return to syllabi and grading standards of just 30 years ago would result in mass flunkings. Failure on tests apparently means the test, not the test taker, is found wanting.

What follows is the erosion of meritocracy and competence. And that reality is starting to explain the great unraveling: why our bridges take decades to build rather than a few years, why train tracks are not laid after a decade of “planning,” and why to drive down a once brilliantly engineered, but now crammed and dangerous road is to revisit the “Road Warrior” of film. Sam Bankman-Fried and Elizabeth Holmes are the apt characters of our age.

Institutions That Went Rogue

The FBI has imploded. It has all but become a Third World retrieval and investigatory service for the Democratic Party. Its last four directors either have lied, misled, or pleaded amnesia while under oath.

In 2016, the bureau with the Democratic National Committee sought to destroy the integrity of an election by fabricating a Russian collusion hoax. Its continuance and coverup ultimately required FBI agents and lawyers to alter legal documents, to lie under oath, to destroy subpoenaed phone data, and to outsource illegal suppression of First Amendment rights to Silicon Valley contractors. The nation now fears there isn't anything the FBI might *not* do.

As we became hyper-legal with Trump, we are more sublegal with the entire Biden family. For a decade, with impunity, it gorged multimillion profits from selling the “Big Guy”/Mr. “10 Percent” Joe Biden's name and access—sums for the most part hidden and likely not completely taxed. We all know it is true, and we all know the FBI and Department of Justice know it is true, and we know further that the truth means nothing.

This self-satisfied generation constantly brags of transforming elections. But it will be known more as the destroyer of a once hallowed Election Day. Not so long ago 70-80 percent of the electorate took the trouble of voting under transparent protocols. We replaced it in most states with 60-70 percent of the votes without audit and the product of vote harvesting and curing. Our generation, in just a couple of years, destroyed Election Day voting and Election Night counting.

The New Medievalism

Despite different calibrations, various data reveal what is self-evident to the naked eye. The American middle class is shrinking, if not insidiously sliding into indebted peasantry. Westerners

are regressing and by design, now deciding daily whether to top up the tank, turn up the heat, or buy beef.

Society is also bifurcating. A tiny powerful minority has more leverage than any other elite in the history of civilization. And a large underclass of subsidized poor shares with the wealthy a disdain for the struggling middle class, the old bulwark of democracy.

In place of knightly penances and chivalric oaths, our elite takes Bankman-Fried-like vows to “fight climate change,” support “transitioning,” and ensure “diversity, equity, and inclusion.” But like their Medieval brethren, they do so only by first enhancing, not endangering, their own careers.

For the ruling class, prep schools, alphabetic certifications from tony universities, and revolving-door résumés are modern versions of having an abbey on site, a stately coat-of-arms, or taking vows from the correct religious orders. Otherwise, it is the same medievalism masked by pretension.

Our Rhine and Danube

America is rapidly resembling something like wide-open fifth-century A.D. Rome, when its traditional inviolable northern borders on the Rhine and Danube rivers vanished. Thousands of unassimilated tribes crisscrossed as they pleased on the premise that no one among their overripe, soft hosts could or would dare stop them.

Joe Biden just remarked that he is too busy to visit the southern border. And why not? There may have been roughly 5 million illegal aliens who have crossed it since his inauguration. He earns contempt both from those who try to enforce the border and those who cross illegally over it.

Biden surrealistically trashes Trump’s supposed archaic idea of a wall—always without noting self-evident truths about it: anywhere Biden stopped the wall or has not replaced prior rickety fencing, there are the most porous and trafficked entry points.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas’ various mendacities that the border is “secure” translate to allowing as many million aliens as possible to break the law to enter the United States in the four years of the Biden experiment. The administration sees itself in a race to create a one-off window of historic laxity through which millions can pour in—before a comatose nation wakes up and shuts it down.

We are approaching an historic 50 million residents who were not born in the United States, and of various legal and illegal statuses. In a sane world, we might survive the challenge—*if* newcomers had all come legally, learned the customs and language of their desired new home, were audited and queued by some logical meritocratic process, and were quickly assimilated and integrated by a confident host population that assumed any who wished to live in America surely desired help in becoming an American and felt gratitude to their hosts.

Instead, there is only chaos—and it is by design.

The legal immigrant waiting in line to enter the United States is considered a fool, while illegal aliens and residents instead quickly absorb three messages from their hosts. First, illegal residents will often be treated better than American citizens, at least in terms of lax law enforcement, various legal exemptions and amnesties, and unaudited entitlements.

Second, many will soon learn they can assume immediate moral claims against the majority population of their new home, who can be seen as racist oppressors and obligated to offer reparatory concessions in terms of hiring, admissions, and entitlements.

Third, too many will quickly learn, Ilhan Omar-style, to harbor a quiet derision for their benefactors. Their contempt is not due to Americans' dearth of magnanimity and generosity, much less to "systemic racism." Instead, their American hosts are silently assumed to be naïve, timid, overly solicitous, malleable, easily manipulated, rolled, and conned—especially when it is understood that if the roles were reversed and the entrants were the hosts, they would have a different notion of borders.

The idea of 330 million American citizens of different incidental races and ethnicities united by a common American identity of shared values, customs, and traditions is all but mocked. In its place is arising something like the former Yugoslavia—an undefined mishmash of competing and increasingly hostile tribal interests, with residents sorting themselves out into red and blue states that eventually will lead to two antithetical Americas.

So once assumed services, customs, institutions, and expectations are eroding—from a safe walk to a government office in a large city's downtown, to a visit to the local public emergency room in *extremis* for humane, rapid, and competent care, to a clean, safe subway ride in a major city, or watching election returns conclude on Election Night.

A Nation of Thieves?

In a nearby Home Depot the other day, there were two long lines to check out. The other six were closed, as was the largest exit with several self-check-out counters.

Why? When asked the clerk whispered that the theft rate is high in the store and that from time to time it shuts down various exits to limit stealing or perhaps to confuse calculating thieves. I added that I had learned that almost any large item in a box purchased at Home Depot had to be first opened to ensure that key parts like knobs, wires, and screws had not been ripped off.

A local Walmart stopped its 24-hour service; again, the clerk said it was due to unsustainable looting during the early morning hours.

I also went to Walgreens and Rite-Aid recently. Much of what anyone wanted, from razors to antihistamines, was under lock-and-key. None of this was true just a decade ago. I live in a rural area among small towns—a world away from Los Angeles and San Francisco where smash-and-

grab robberies and unapologetic looting have caused the mass closures of pharmacies and all-service stores.

Exemptions given thefts under \$950 in some states may be the culprit. Others cite the post-George Floyd riots and the climate of unpunished street criminality. Maybe years of mask-wearing made us forget who normally had used masks and for what reasons.

Weaponized activist district attorneys and virtue-signaling mayors also signal to criminals that property crimes don't warrant arrest, much less conviction, much less incarceration.

But whatever the cause, a once famously lawful America has become a veritable land of thieves. The criminal is all but exempt. And the middle class and poor suffer as a result from poor services, higher prices, reduced hours, and fewer stores.

We know the solution is to deter crime by assured punishment for the guilty. But the majority of Americans either cannot or will not demand a return to sanity for fear of some sort of undefined pushback from their elites. Pick your charge: "racism," "privilege," "bias," "discrimination." Any will do.

We have seen lots of cultural revolutions in this country, but never one that was so singularly focused on razing the foundations of America—until now. Yes, there is a lot of ruin in great nations. But even America is by now running low on it.

Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won, The Case for Trump and the newly released The Dying Citizen. This article first appeared in American Greatness, the Stanford University Hoover Institution Daily Update, and many other outlets on December 12, 2022.

**THE LEFT'S ARGUMENT FOR SOCIALISM IS
ENCAPSULATED IN THE ARTICLE BELOW
WHILE WE DISAGREE WITH IT , YOU SHOULD BE AWEAR
OF THEIR ATTACK ON CIVILIZATION**

**CAPITALISM FUELS THE CLIMATE CRISIS. CAN
IT ALSO OFFER SOLUTIONS?**

What if instead of replacing fossil fuels with renewable electricity, we should be focused on reducing our energy use as much as possible? What if the key to maintaining a stable climate — and protecting Earth's dwindling biodiversity — is accepting that our current lifestyles and consumption habits, at least in the developed world, are simply unsustainable?

BY SAMMY ROTH

How many solar and wind farms will it take for the U.S. to stop burning coal, oil and gas? How much energy will be needed to power hundreds of millions of electric cars? And where will we mine enough lithium to build the batteries in those cars?

As an energy reporter focused on the climate crisis — and a young person hoping for a long life on this planet — I spend my days asking and trying to answer those kinds of questions. But what if they're the wrong questions?

What if instead of replacing fossil fuels with renewable electricity, we should be focused on reducing our energy use as much as possible? What if the key to maintaining a stable climate — and protecting Earth's dwindling biodiversity — is accepting that our current lifestyles and consumption habits, at least in the developed world, are simply unsustainable?

And what if trying to solve climate change by doubling down on capitalism — renewable energy tax credits for wealthy investors, requirements for companies to sell cleaner products — only perpetuates the broken economic systems that got us into this mess in the first place, exacerbating income inequality and fueling continued destruction of the natural world?

Those are tantalizing questions. And I've seen them posed a lot lately, especially as I've written about rooftop solar.

California officials are scheduled to vote today on a plan that would [significantly reduce financial incentives](#) to install solar panels on your home. For many Californians, it's the height of lunacy. Why pull back on a technology that — unlike large solar farms in the desert — can reduce pollution without paving over wildlife habitat? Why not commit to taking power out of the hands of monopoly utility companies that make huge profits building electric lines to connect desert solar farms to energy-hungry cities?

Electric transmission lines near Southern California Edison's Vincent Substation north of Los Angeles.

(Gary Coronado / Los Angeles Times)

Writing in the Intercept this month, journalist Christopher Ketcham [put voice](#) to those criticisms. The “dismal reality,” he said, is that “green energy will save not the complex web of life on Earth but the particular way of life of one domineering species.”

“Mainstream climate activism of the Bill McKibben variety points toward a grandly hopeful end within the confines of acceptable capitalist discourse: decarbonization of the global economy, with technologies driven by profit-seeking corporations subsidized by governments,” he wrote. “Taking up this banner of optimistic can-do-ism, the environmental movement has convinced itself, and sought to convince the public, that with a worldwide build-out of renewable energy systems, humanity will power its dynamic industrial civilization with jobs-producing green machines while also — somehow — rescuing countless species from the brink.”

As far as Ketcham is concerned, it's a lie. Global warming, he wrote, is just one of many ways humans are fueling the extinction crisis, along with suburban sprawl, agricultural expansion, deforestation, hunting, plastic pollution, water contamination, livestock overgrazing, overfishing and more. Solar farms, wind turbines and lithium mines are adding to the destruction.

What should we make of that argument? For some perspective, I got in touch with Bill McKibben — the 350.org co-founder who led the campaign against the Keystone XL oil pipeline, and Ketcham's exemplar of “mainstream climate activism.”

On the one hand, McKibben told me, he's [written books](#) about the dangers of endless growth. On the other hand, he's called for a [World War II-style](#) mobilization to build clean energy projects — including big solar and wind farms — that can help keep temperatures relatively stable. He thinks it's “hard to imagine the changes in human behavior and desire that, in the short time scientists have given us, will drive demand for energy low enough to let us catch up with the physics of global warming.”

Rapid transformation is especially important, he said, given that millions of people [die each year](#) from breathing the byproducts of burning fossil fuels — even before accounting for worsening floods, storms and fires from heat-trapping carbon emissions.

“So I think we’re going to need some technological changes,” McKibben said in an email.

Personally, I’m sympathetic to the idea that solar and wind farms aren’t always completely “green.” Over four years living in Palm Springs, two hours east of L.A., I learned to love the Mojave Desert. Hiking past bighorn sheep on Mt. San Jacinto, camping under the stars in Anza-Borrego, exploring remote stretches of Death Valley — these are some of my favorite memories.

I also don’t need convincing that big utility companies can cause serious problems. I just finished reading Wall Street Journal reporter Katherine Blunt’s illuminating book, [“California Burning,”](#) about Pacific Gas & Electric’s history of igniting deadly wildfires, allowing gas pipelines to explode and saddling ratepayers with high bills. Southern California Edison, too, has sparked [deadly, destructive fires](#). These are the companies on which the Golden State is banking its renewable energy future.

So the idea that we need some fundamental economic restructuring, not just cleaner energy? Yeah, it makes sense to me.

And yet, I am in many ways a typical citizen of the developed world, consuming more than my fair share and not feeling especially bad about it most of the time. I drive a Toyota Camry that runs on gasoline, use plastic products just about every day and buy way more Dodgers T-shirts than I need. I travel by airplane a few times a year. I love the occasional hamburger.

I’m planning to switch to an electric car when my Camry breaks down, and I’ll always choose a meatless Impossible burger when I have the option. I try to take public transit when it’s convenient. I’m good about turning off lights that I’m not using.

But it’s tough for me to imagine giving up flying, or going vegan, or reorienting my daily life around limited consumption. And I’m guessing there are hundreds of millions of people around the world — probably billions — who feel the same way.

So is it really a wise idea to tie solving climate change to reforming capitalism? Do we really want to bet our collective future on the tenuous hope of persuading wealthy countries that after centuries of economic growth, they need to cut back?

Even if the answer is no, there are plenty of ways to confront the climate crisis while consuming less.

There are huge, relatively painless [energy-efficiency savings](#) yet to be wrung out of our homes and offices — and every kilowatt-hour of electricity generation that isn’t needed will result in less habitat destruction, less mining and less steel production.

The same is true for every trip we can take by foot, bike or train, every beef hamburger we don't eat, and every throwaway plastic water bottle we don't buy. And yes, every solar panel that gets installed on a rooftop, rather than in the desert.

A crew from nonprofit solar installer Grid Alternatives places panels at a home in L.A.'s Watts neighborhood in 2021.

(Gary Coronado / Los Angeles Times)

Also important: Not every solar or wind farm needs to gobble up pristine wildlife habitat. California has tried for years to direct renewable energy developers to the [least ecologically valuable areas](#). There are also efforts to [convert agricultural land to solar farms](#) — and in some places [grow crops under solar panels](#), a technology known as “agrivoltaics.”

Other possible solutions are even more creative, such as building [solar canopies over water aqueducts](#) — or atop parking lots, which would be encouraged by a [new bill](#) in the California Legislature. Parking-lot solar could be especially useful in Los Angeles County, where we've got five times more parking spots than housing units, [as my colleague Ryan Fonseca notes](#).

None of those solutions eliminate the need for some sacrifices, at least if we want to stop cooking the planet.

On the personal side of the ledger, many of us will almost certainly need to drive less, eat less meat and fly less often. There's also [extensive research](#) concluding that rooftop solar won't be nearly enough to eliminate fossil fuels on its own. And there are only so many places to build large solar and wind farms before environmental conflicts start cropping up.

In McKibben's view, though, it's possible to view the transition to solar and wind power as an “interim step.”

“Relying on them will move us at least some ways toward a more small-d democratic and localized world, which I think is compatible with the longer-term philosophical goals of a less consumptive society,” he said.

Here's what it comes down to, in my view. It's easy to castigate ourselves for exploiting the Earth, and to shrug off the difficult choices presented by climate change as pointless anyway, if we're just going to keep vacuuming up precious resources.

It's harder to acknowledge there's no perfect way to keep this planet safe for billions of humans and countless other living things, and to make uncomfortable choices aimed at limiting the damage — and, hopefully, making the world a little better.

Sammy Roth covers energy for the Los Angeles Times and writes the weekly [Boiling Point](#) newsletter. He previously reported for the Desert Sun and USA Today, where he focused on renewable energy, climate change, electric utilities and public lands. He grew up in Westwood and would very much like to see the Dodgers win the World Series again. This is the Dec. 15, 2022, edition of Boiling Point, a weekly newsletter about climate change and the environment in California and the American West. [Sign up here](#) to get it in your inbox. This article was republished in the LA Times of December 15, 2022.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



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Santa Barbara, Santa Maria & San Luis Obispo!*



SUPPORT COLAB



MIKE BROWN ADVOCATES BEFORE THE BOS



VICTOR DAVIS HANSON ADDRESSES A COLAB FORUM



DAN WALTERS EXPLAINS SACTO MACHINATIONS AT A COLAB FORUM



AUTHOR & NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COMMENTATOR BEN SHAPIRO APPEARED AT A COLAB ANNUAL DINNER



NATIONAL RADIO AND TV COMMENTATOR HIGH HEWITT AT COLAB DINNER



MIKE BROWN RALLIES THE FORCES OUTDOORS DURING COVID LOCKDOWN

JOIN OR CONTRIBUTE TO COLAB ON THE NEXT PAGE

Join COLAB or contribute by control clicking at: [COLAB San Luis Obispo County \(colabslo.org\)](https://colabslo.org) or use the form below:

Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business
San Luis Obispo County
"Your Property - Your Taxes - Our Future"
PO Box 13601 - San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 / Phone: 805.548-0340
Email: colabslo@gmail.com / Website: colabslo.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

General Member: \$100 - \$249 \$ _____ Voting Member: \$250 - \$5,000 \$ _____

Sustaining Member: \$5,000 + \$ _____

(Sustaining Membership includes a table of 10 at the Annual Fundraiser Dinner)

General members will receive all COLAB updates and newsletters. Voting privileges are limited to Voting Members and Sustainable Members with one vote per membership.

MEMBER INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

How Did You Hear About COLAB?

Radio Internet Public Hearing Friend

COLAB Member(s) / Sponsor(s): _____

NON MEMBER DONATION/CONTRIBUTION OPTION:

For those who choose not to join as a member but would like to support COLAB via a contribution/donation. I would like to contribute \$ _____ to COLAB and my check or credit card information is enclosed/provided.

Donations/Contributions do not require membership though it is encouraged in order to provide updates and information.
Memberships and donation will be kept confidential if that is your preference.
Confidential Donation/Contribution/Membership

PAYMENT METHOD:

Check Visa MasterCard Discover Amex NOT accepted.

Cardholder Name: _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: ____/____ Billing Zip Code: _____ CVV: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____