

Supervisors loan Marin Energy Authority \$210,000 to battle PG&E

[Richard Halstead](#), 10/13/2009

Marin County supervisors agreed Tuesday to loan the Marin Energy Authority another \$210,000 in its quest to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the county and compete with Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

Also Tuesday, authority officials announced they have selected a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell to serve as the county's alternative energy provider.

The new loan comes in addition to the more than \$330,000 that the county previously loaned the authority. The county will get most if not all of its money back if the authority goes forward to successfully sell its own electricity.

The Marin Energy Authority, which consists of the county of Marin and all of Marin's cities with the exception of Novato, Larkspur and Corte Madera, was formed last year to explore projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A state law passed in 2002 allows California cities and counties to combine their citizens' purchasing power to buy electricity, an approach known as community choice aggregation.

Dawn Weisz, the authority's interim director, told supervisors that customers who join Marin Clean Energy will have the choice of using 100 percent renewable power by paying about 7 percent more than what PG&E is charging for electricity. The authority also plans to offer customers a "light green" option, which would maximize the percentage of renewable power used while matching PG&E's rate.

PG&E recently informed the California Public Utilities Commission that it will be unable to meet the state-mandated requirement of getting 20 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2010.

Weisz said that after a competitive bidding process, the authority has selected Shell Energy North America, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, which has its headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands, to serve as the wholesaler of its electricity. The authority's board approved a draft contract for its power purchase from Shell Energy, and the contract is being reviewed by the authority's members.

The authority's board is scheduled to vote on a final contract on Nov. 4. After that, authority members will have 90 days to opt out. Marin residents who live in cities that don't sign the contract will not have the option of purchasing their electricity from the authority. However, residents who live in cities who do sign the contract will have the option of keeping PG&E as their energy supplier.

Weisz told supervisors the authority will need to borrow about \$2 million to cover start-up costs if the venture goes forward. County Administrator Matthew Hymel said there had been some discussion about the county guaranteeing the loan. Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Susan Adams, however, said they thought other members of the authority should also share some of the financial risk.

"They should have some skin in the game too," Adams said.

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