

Monterey County Weekly
Steve McShane
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When we flip a switch or plug in our phones, we don't think about how or where that power comes from. Frankly, our power structure pre-dates thoughtful consumption. The first electricity grid was built 100 miles north in San Francisco in 1879, 15 years before the radio was invented.

California still relies on a lot of antiquated energy infrastructure making it challenging for a state of 40 million people to put fossil fuels in the rear view mirror. I'm committed to making it happen.

For the last year, Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP) is changing where our power comes from, starting by delivering carbon-free electricity to customers in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties.

MBCP started two years ago, when a coalition of community leaders including myself, decided that tackling the issue of sustainable power was too important to kick down the road any longer. We wanted to source clean energy, deliver it to households and businesses, and if possible, do it at affordable rates that saved them money.

MBCP is a unique agency that under California's Community Choice Energy model can buy electricity from renewable sources wholesale and deliver it to customers in our region using PG&E's existing infrastructure and delivery systems.

Exactly one year ago, MBCP started delivering clean power to customers in the tri-county region. This month we celebrate the agency's "Happy First Birthday."

It's been an exciting first year. In only eight months, we paid back loans to each of the respective counties, served over 270,000 customers, and were able to invest in new, long-term, clean energy projects, including wind, solar, and storage, much of it in California itself.

All that clean energy meant less carbon emissions. In 2018, MBCP reduced an estimated 300,000 metric tons of carbon emissions. For a non-scientist like me, that roughly translates into 675,000 square feet or 11 football fields, but experts at MBCP prefer to think of it like taking 64,000 cars off the road for one year.

The most exciting part? Not only are we consuming energy more thoughtfully, we are re-investing in energy infrastructure for clean energy sources to benefit us and our planet for decades.

Two solar projects that we have broken ground on will generate enough power for 32,000 homes. That is significant for our customers, but also doubles the long-term megawatt capacity from renewable energy facilities across the state's 18 other Community Choice Energy agencies like ours.

MBCP is a local organization looking to the future. We're already talking about micro-grids that will take energy infrastructure even further. Ultimately, we want to be building infrastructure that can last for the next 140 years and beyond while supporting true economic development for the Monterey Bay region.

Last year we were able to give our customers rebates totaling \$4.4 million. That number will continue to grow each year.

As PG&E proceeds with its bankruptcy case, we will continue to serve our customers. Don't expect any day-to-day changes. The future is carbon-free in the Monterey Bay region and I appreciate your role in it.

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