

The Monterey County Herald
Salinas joins PG&E plan to limit emissions
By CLAUDIA MELÉNDEZ SALINAS
07/30/2008

Following up on its promise to become an environmental leader, the city of Salinas will pay \$7,700 a year to join a program said to help offset greenhouse emissions.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. announced Tuesday that Salinas and the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments joined ClimateSmart, a voluntary program in which customers contribute financially to projects that purportedly offset gases that contribute to global warming.

In February, PG&E purchased 214,000 metric tons of gas emission reductions, including 14,000 metric tons from the Lompico Headwaters Forest in Santa Cruz County. The forest was scheduled to be logged and, by contributing to its purchase, PG&E is helping to preserve the trees, which convert carbon dioxide gas into oxygen.

“We’re helping our customers use less energy and maintain higher efficiency,” said Don Hall, Central Coast regional manager of service and sales for PG&E.

By joining the program, Salinas and AMBAG will offset more than 1.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide every year, or more than 184 pounds every day, according to PG&E.

“I view this as significant as signing the (U.S.) Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and the United Nations Urban Environment Agenda,” Mayor Dennis Donohue said.

An average of 20 pounds of carbon dioxide is produced per gallon of gasoline consumed, according to Climatecrisis.org, the Web site promoting Al Gore’s documentary about global warming, “An Inconvenient Truth.” By joining ClimateSmart, Salinas and AMBAG say they are offsetting 9 gallons of gas being consumed daily on the Central Coast.

Climatecrisis.org states that the average American generates about 15,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year from personal transportation, home energy use and energy needed to produce all the products and services consumed.

In the past 12 months, Salinas signed the mayors agreement and the U.N. agenda to show the council’s commitment to protecting the environment.

It has participated in AMBAG’s Energy Watch, an \$8.6 million program aimed at keeping 48.3 million pounds of carbon from being released into the environment in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties. Elisabeth

Russell, AMBAG special projects manager, said the association has reached 85 percent of its goal.

“The way we are reducing emissions from the environment is by doing energy efficient projects — the more energy we save, the more we save our environment,” she said.

As part of the project, AMBAG has evaluated the energy efficiency of 13 Salinas-owned buildings, helping replace inefficient lighting and coming up with retrofitting goals to make them more energy-efficient. El Gabilan Library was retrofitted during its recent renovation.

Salinas “is completely dedicated” to the program, Russell said.

“They’re one of the highest ranked for our region; they’re one of our leaders, actually,” said Russell.

Any PG&E customer can join its ClimateSmart program. The average fee per household is calculated by the amount of energy it spends, averaging about \$5 a month. There are 717 residential and commercial customers in the Monterey area who have signed up for the program since it started in 2007, spokesman Jeff Smith said.

Claudia Melendez Salinas can be reached at 753-6755 or cmelendez@montereyherald.com.