Southern California Leadership Council

Water, Energy and Agriculture—Achieving Environmental Co- Benefits

How can California reduce CO2 emissions, conserve water, increase its carbon credits market, add to its renewable energy portfolio and reduce some of it power link capacity needs to sensitive environmental areas?

Create multiple economic incentives for some of California's agricultural tracts to voluntarily convert their use from "photosynthesis" to "photovoltaic" farming.

Certain agricultural tracts in the "sun rich" and "grid proximate" San Joaquin, Riverside, San Bernardino, Coachella and Imperials areas are relegated, due to soil and other conditions, to low margin, high water use crops, such as cotton and alfalfa. These are also often energy intensive uses.

With targeted economic incentives to promote the voluntary conversion of some of these tracts to solar voltaic farms, banking of water use and elimination of crop farm related energy consumption and emissions, California can achieve multiple policy goals and farmers can create better economics for their land.

Not unlike California's "Million Solar Rooftops" program, a "Thousand Solar Farms" program could offer appropriate economic incentives for a larger scale, more cost effective, distributed and grid accessible, renewable power generation program.

Add an economics driven "Water Conservation Incentive" to pay the farm owner to dedicate the unused water to a "regional water bank" program. The unused water supplies could then be used/sold for other purposes including environmental mitigation and future water supply needs for communities and water agencies that achieve California's 20% water conservation objectives.

If Agricultural Preserve Tax status is at risk, continue the status for the solar farm application.

Along with the value of the land for the solar farm, these multiple incentives could achieve all the environmental co- benefits described above.