

## Gov. Brown Gives Renewable Energy Goals the Green Light

By Jim Metropulos, Senior Advocate

On April 12, California Governor Jerry Brown signed SB x1 2, requiring public and private utilities to obtain 33 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020. The new renewable power standard (RPS) established by the bill will electrify the Golden State's economy with new jobs, while reducing the pollution that causes climate disruption.

California previously required its three investor-owned utilities to generate 20% of their energy from renewable resources by 2010. However, there was no requirement for the state's utilities to increase the amount of energy from renewables after 2010. With the signing of SB x1-2, California will require both the investor-owned utilities and, now, municipal utilities to procure 33% of their energy from renewable resources by 2020. Sierra Club California has long called on California lawmakers to increase the standard to at least 33 percent by 2020.

As California moves to expand renewable power generation in the state, lawmakers and regulators always must keep in mind whether renewable sources of energy are equally sustainable in terms of environmental impacts or energy supply. A truly sustainable RPS that protects wild places while fully empowering clean-energy projects represents the best pathway to a clean-energy future. While we support renewable energy, Sierra Club California will fight attempts to streamline the permitting process or weaken the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for renewable energy projects in ways that limit public participation or eliminate judicial review.

Sierra Club California is urging additional reforms to ensure the continued success of a renewable energy program and provide green jobs:

**Adopt Feed-In Tariffs.** First, in designing a new approach to renewable energy, the Brown Administration and the California Legislature can look to programs that already work. A program, known as a "feed-in tariff," has already been successful in international markets, including in Germany. A "feed-in tariff" sets fixed and fair prices for renewable energy that is added to the electrical grid by home and business owners with renewable energy on their roofs or other privately-owned areas, rewarding investors exhausted by the uncertainty of our current system and ensuring that local jobs are created as California pursues clean energy development. In his Clean Energy Jobs Plan, Governor Brown calls for California to develop 12,000 megawatts of localized energy by 2020 through a system of calibrated renewable power payments.

**Expand Community Choice.** Second, Sierra Club California is co-sponsoring Senate Bill 790 by Senator Leno this year that would strengthen existing law related to Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) to foster fair competition and allow local governments to pursue CCA without undue barriers and excessive burdens. Under CCA programs, California cities and counties can aggregate the electricity loads of residents, businesses, and public facilities and procure the electricity to serve those loads, thus competing with the investor-owned utility serving their area. Local governments can use CCA programs as a tool to increase the use of renewable power resources, to achieve substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and to create new local jobs. Marin Energy Authority, the only CCA operating in the state, has the highest delivered renewable energy percentage in the state at 27% renewable for 2010. California needs more programs like this.

California is once again taking the lead in setting achievable goals and developing new sources of clean, renewable power. With an estimated 100,000 megawatts of developable in-state renewable energy capacity and building partnerships with neighboring states, we can keep the momentum going by continuing to make policy choices that treat clean and safe renewable energy as a priority for California's environment and its economy.