

## **Local agencies in no hurry to join initiative**

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### **By Kathy Portie**

Green is the color of prosperity. That's the word the movers and shakers behind the Green Valley Initiative want to spread throughout the Inland Empire.

The Green Valley Initiative is a regional economic development plan that promotes a green technology economy in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Technologies supported by the initiative include renewable energy, alternative transportation and sustainable lifestyles. Green Valley Initiative members are actively writing grant applications, working with local colleges and encouraging county and city governments to adopt public policy changes.

Since 2007, more than 500 government, education, business, transportation, utility, environmental and community groups in Riverside and San Bernardino counties signed on to participate in the program. Big Bear Valley agencies and organizations are not among the participants.

Big Bear City Community Services District General Manager Mike Mayer explains the CSD's hesitation. "We are still researching it," Mayer said. "I don't want to rush into signing anything until I know more about it."

Mayer said the CSD offers a variety of green services to its constituents, including curbside recycling, a water conservation incentive program and community clean-up days.

Adoption of Green Valley Initiative is slow going on the west end of the Valley, too, according to Cheri Haggerty, director of intergovernmental and community relations for the city of Big Bear Lake. The City Council's green sustainability efforts committee has received information on the program, but has not had the opportunity to review the material, Haggerty said.

"I would imagine in the future, if (the committee) decides it is important, we would probably give members of Green Valley Initiative a chance to make a more detailed presentation before making a recommendation to the City Council," Haggerty said.

The city adopted several programs and incentives to promote green lifestyles, Haggerty said. The city has several hybrid vehicles in its fleet, started a recycling program for residents and visitors, uses solar energy to monitor its sewer system, and identified a bike route system within the city limits through a partnership with the Big Bear Valleywide Trails Coalition.

Paul Biane, chair of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, believes the Green Valley Initiative is an important program. "The Green Valley Initiative offers us an opportunity to unite as a region and to send a message that the Inland Empire is prepared

to be in the forefront of the green movement in Southern California.”

Haggerty said Biane encourages San Bernardino County and its communities to get involved. He was instrumental in the county’s Green County program and is one of the founding members of the Green Valley Initiative. “He’s really involved in the whole green county movement,” Haggerty said. “It all goes hand-in-hand.”

What can the Green Valley Initiative do for Big Bear Valley? The theory is there is strength in numbers when it comes to securing funding and attracting green industry and technology to the region. “I think they pride themselves on their leverage,” Haggerty said about Green Valley Initiative. An example of Green Valley Initiative’s leverage is its ability to apply for millions of dollars in grant funding for green sustainability programs. For more information on the Green Valley Initiative, visit the Web site [www.greenvalleynow.org](http://www.greenvalleynow.org). For more information on the San Bernardino County Green County program for residents and businesses, visit the Web site [www.greencountysb.com](http://www.greencountysb.com).

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