

County Companies Setting Green Goals

By: David Goldstein, Guest Writer
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Cutting consumption of fossil fuels would not only clean the air and help meet climate change goals but also cut energy costs by lowering demand, improve American energy independence and address the nation's trade imbalance.

Innovative local companies are putting Ventura County at the forefront of the energy developments needed to help us reach these environmental and economic goals. With new technologies, the companies plan to increase efficiency and boost our supply of energy.

For example, Transonic Combustion Inc., with its research and development headquarters in Camarillo, was recently named by CNET as one of "five leading green transportation technology companies" in the United States. The company is testing a combustion process to enable conventional internal-combustion engines to run at ultrahigh efficiency on regular gasoline and bio-renewable fuels.

Transonic spokesman Don Kamarga said, "The prospect of 100 miles per gallon in a mid-sized car with good acceleration is drawing keen interest from major car manufacturers."

Another company, Ceres Inc. in Thousand Oaks, has been developing seeds to grow crops suitable for biofuel and biopower. "Energy crops" grown from seeds will include better varieties of switchgrass and high-biomass sorghum, which, the company claims, will grow faster, require less processing and use less water and fertilizer than crops currently being used to produce biofuels.

A University of Nebraska study showed that ethanol made from switchgrass reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 90 percent when compared with petroleum and yields almost five times more net energy than corn-based ethanol. GreenWave Energy Solutions is another local company specializing in alternative energy. Following a nomination from the Agoura-Oak Park-Conejo Chamber of Commerce, GreenWave recently received an award from the United Chamber of Commerce for its plans to harness energy from ocean waves.

GreenWave has also received several other awards for its plans, which include applications to place research buoys off the coasts of San Luis Obispo and Mendocino counties.

According to the company's permit application with the Federal Energy

Regulatory Commission, GreenWave hopes to eventually generate 100 megawatts of power from the San Luis Obispo site, providing enough power for nearly 100,000 homes.

A fourth local innovator is Kreido Biofuels Inc. Based in Camarillo, this 12-year-old company developed technology for processing chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

After spending \$20 million developing a new technology to manufacture biodiesel, Kreido became a publicly traded company in January 2007 and raised an additional \$25 million.

According to representative Denica Gordon, Kreido's competitors take up to 90 minutes to turn vegetable oil into biodiesel, but Kreido's spinning tube-in-tube process takes less than a second and can use a wide variety of products, including oil from soybeans or palm.

A company with a factory in Simi Valley, Aerovironment Inc., has been particularly successful with energy-related innovations.

Its products include rooftop wind turbines for electricity generation, a solar pump controller and a variety of power-processing systems.

An unmanned aircraft it manufactures uses hydrogen to power internal systems, and the company was also involved in the development of alternate-powered vehicles, including the Solar Challenger, Sunraycer and General Motors' EV-1. The company was founded by Paul MacCready, whom Time magazine called "one of the greatest minds of the 20th century."

Local entrepreneurs are advancing inventions providing hope for the future. Those lucky enough to work for these companies keep an eye on the environment every day. Through their energy innovations and our conservation, together we can reach environmental and economic goals.

On the Net:

<http://www.tscombustion.com>

<http://www.kreido.com>

<http://www.ceres.net>

<http://www.avinc.com>

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