

SALTON SEA & RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITIES
An Imperial Valley Site Visit of the
Senate Select Committee on California's Energy Independence

October 1, 2013
Del Rio Country Club
Brawley, CA

BACKGROUND

On June 27, 2013, this Select Committee held an informational hearing to examine how geothermal and algal biofuel energy development around the Salton could create a possible funding stream to support the Sea's restoration efforts and contribute to the regional and state economy.

To build on that hearing, the Select Committee felt it was important to follow-up with a site visit to take a first-hand look at existing renewable power facilities and assess how state and local government collaboration can facilitate future investments that create jobs and encourage regional economic growth.

Renewable Energy: The Power to Generate Jobs

Located in the Imperial and Coachella Valley of Southern California, the Salton Sea represents one of the most abundant sources of renewable energy in the state, including the most prolific geothermal capacity in the world. In addition to geothermal energy, the Salton Sea has shown incredible potential for biofuel development. Due to the growing demand for power on the western grid, which has made the Imperial County a mecca for discussion of renewable energy potential, there is vast opportunity for job creation in an area which has held a steady unemployment rate of 20% for the last five years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). This area surrounding the Salton Sea has the ability to produce over 2,000 megawatts of power, and recent solar projects have created nearly 740 jobs, most of them for local residents.

With the recent closure of the San Onofre nuclear power plant, geothermal and other renewable energy sources will become even more important to our state's energy grid. Therefore, facilitating opportunities for geothermal, algae and solar projects will not only create jobs, support local efforts currently underway, but will also reflect the state's commitment to use 33% renewable energy.

The tour will provide on-site glimpse into a solar, geothermal and algae facility. As the Committee evaluates the merits of these companies, we ask that Members consider appropriate legislative and regulatory decisions that could 1) facilitate renewable energy development; 2) avoid potential resource conflicts; and 3) mitigate environmental impacts related to geothermal and algal biofuel testing and development.

Successful integration of renewable energy projects in Imperial Valley will require a collaborative effort on the part of multiple agencies, interested groups, and local citizens. Bringing stakeholders together to assess the viability and feasibility of solar, geothermal and algal biofuel energy development around the Salton Sea is an important step toward reinvesting in energy industries to create jobs and improve the regional economy.