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George Foulsham

UCSB Hopes Central Coast Sustainability Summit Will Produce 'Action Plan'

After bringing together people from sustainability organizations throughout the Santa Barbara area a year ago, UC Santa Barbara sustainability leaders are raising the bar this year for a second Central Coast Sustainability Summit.

The summit, to be held October 25, 2012, at UCSB's Loma Pelona Conference Center, will gather representatives from area governments, community organizations, and schools to create action plans that will focus on renewable energy and product stewardship. The event runs from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Among the officials expected to attend are Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider, three county supervisors, and Roger Aceves, the mayor pro tem of Goleta.

"In last year's summit, we were incredibly successful in developing partnerships that have carried over into this year," said Katie Maynard, sustainability coordinator for UCSB's Department of Geography and the conference organizer. "We shared wonderful best practices and information. We got to meet each other."

But, Maynard said, there was never a sense of what specific actions were taken as a result of the first summit. "So this year, we decided to propose two themes -- renewable energy and product stewardship," she said. "These themes are an opportunity for us to focus our post-conference action, and to really show how the

summit can be a core driver for action."

The morning and afternoon keynote speeches will focus on the two themes. The morning keynote, starting at 8:30 a.m., will be delivered by Heidi Sanborn, executive director of the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC). Sanborn founded the CPSC in 2007 to change the way product waste is managed in California.

Also speaking in the morning session will be Megan Birney, energy programs manager for the Community Environmental Council. Since 2007, Birney has helped Santa Barbara decrease dependence on fossil fuels through energy conservation, energy efficiency, and making the switch to renewable sources of energy.

The welcoming remarks will be followed by a World Café: a multi-table discussion with nine representatives from the county, city, and schools at each table. "Each table will have three discussion questions," Maynard said. "The first question is, what are current barriers to multijurisdictional partnerships and how can we overcome those barriers? Then the next two questions go into specific things related to one of the two themes."

Conference organizers are hoping that the participants set a goal of collectively supporting a renewable energy development. "It could be either solar or wind, and it could be an incentive program, or it could look like a specific renewable energy farm," Maynard said.

The same idea applies to the other theme of product stewardship. "It's a basic concept of thinking about all of the products that we use, not just from the point at which we use them, but from where they came," she said. "How was it manufactured and created? How do we use it? What do we do with it when we're done with it? And where's it going? How does it become a new product?"

After the World Café, the summit will separate into concurrent sessions that will include topics such as green business, best practices in renewable energy, plug-in Central Coast, and collaborating for water efficiency in Santa Barbara County.

The closing keynote will be delivered at 2:45 p.m. by Rick Cole, former Ventura city manager. "There's going to be a call to action by Cole, saying that we've got to get out there, we've got to do this," Maynard said.

The summit also provides an opportunity for UCSB faculty members to discuss their research. "It's taking the research we do at the university and making it publicly available, and hopefully putting it into place," said Mo Lovegreen, sustainability director at UCSB. "So it's cutting-edge research making it into the market and making that transition happen in the community."

You never know what might come out of the summit, according to Maynard. "At Arizona State University they developed a major solar project after a similar summit," she said. "We're going to come up with ideas and brainstorm during this summit. We want this to be the driver on coming up with a plan of action."

The event is co-organized by the City of Carpinteria, the City of Goleta, the City of Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara County, the Community Environmental Council, and UC Santa Barbara. The summit is not open to the public. A full schedule of events can be found at <http://www.sustainability.ucsb.edu/2012centralcoastsummit/>

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