UC SANTA BARBARA

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Call to Action

In a relationship formally known as the water-energy nexus, the natural resources are a co-dependent pair. Energy production relies on water — and lots of it — while water collection, cleaning, moving and storage requires large amounts of energy.

Call it an environmental Catch-22.

To solve this conundrum, especially in an era of unprecedented drought in California and climate change everywhere, it's going to take some serious teamwork.

"Integrated, collaborative approaches are really what we're going to need," said renowned water and energy expert Robert Wilkinson, an adjunct professor at UC Santa Barbara's Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. "How can we work together on this problem and come out with wins for the environment, economics and society?"

Wilkinson's remarks came as part of his keynote address during the 4th Annual Central Coast Sustainability Summit held Thursday at UCSB. Collaboration was the spirit of the day for the event that has sharing in its DNA — the summit was founded in 2011 as a means of assembling regional stakeholders in all things sustainability to swap information and ideas.

The gathering saw representatives from local and regional government agencies, chambers of commerce, nonprofit organizations, campuses, utility companies and private industry meet, mix and mingle in a daylong assessment of the problem and discussions about potential solutions.

“The summit brings together practitioners from throughout the Central Coast, this year to address energy and water-shortage issues,” said Jewel Snavely, event organizer and campus sustainability coordinator for UCSB. “California is experiencing an unprecedented drought, with the driest consecutive three years on record and current water supplies severely reduced. Water is on everyone’s mind and energy and water are intimately intertwined. This event provides attendees a great opportunity to learn about best practices in energy and water management and the benefits of community choice aggregation, and to build collaborations that will help advance sustainability in the area.”

With the water-energy nexus as its overriding theme, this year’s iteration of the eco-focused get-together addressed both factors in that equation. Concurrent sessions on energy management, water stewardship and sustainable technology applications were bookended by keynote talks on community choice aggregation and translating knowledge to action.

The day’s first featured speaker was State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson, who issued a call to action of sorts, urging attendees toward solutions that would “maximize water while minimizing energy use.”

“This is an extraordinarily important issue in today’s world,” Jackson said. “And we have the public’s attention to our water crisis. The public understands that we are now in a severe drought and some dramatic measures have to be taken. But out of adversity comes opportunity. Keep up your good work.”

UCSB partners with the cities of Goleta, Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, as well as the County of Santa Barbara and the Community Environmental Council, to plan the annual Central Coast Sustainability Summit.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.