

## 2014 Tribal Renewable Energy Webinar Series

### Questions and Answers

#### “Strategic Energy Planning” Webinar February 26, 2014

**Speakers:** Alex Dane, Lesley Kabotie, Jana Ganion and Gerald Warrington  
**Attendees:** 187

- Q:** Considering the seasonal weather conditions that affect energy consumption, how did Blue Lake Rancheria determine their baseline energy use?
- A:** To determine baseline energy use, the Blue Lake Rancheria analyzed the historic usage and billing data from our local utility, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). We accessed the data through PG&E’s online data dashboard, a system called InterAct. We found the energy consumption of the casino was remarkably consistent—even when factoring in seasons and time of day/night. This is due to the location of the Blue Lake Rancheria, which is about six miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Our climate (and micro-climate in the Mad River Valley) is relatively temperate year-round (i.e., between 50° F and 70° F.) –Jana Ganion
- You can also obtain heating degree data and other weather history at the [National Climatic Data Center](#) to establish a baseline energy consumption.
- Q:** Our Tribe does not have an LLC or a corporate structure to move forward with funding through the USDA RBOG. Is it difficult to form an LLC?
- A:** Federally recognized tribal governments are eligible to apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG). There is also the Rural Business Enterprise Grant program to explore. Please see the USDA website for more details at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/Home.html>. Typical economic development structures for Tribes include a Section 17 Corporation (with individual LLCs under that structure), and/or tribally chartered LLCs, or other types of LLCs. The level of difficulty—including attorney fees and other resources—to set up any of these structures varies with the specific type chosen. – Jana Ganion
- Q:** What financial gains can be made for Tribes by forming an LLC?
- A:** LLCs provide a recognized, proven business structure that may appeal to a broader range of business partners and clients. Further, I would recommend the work of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development <http://hpaied.org/> and their analysis of successful economic development on tribal lands. To paraphrase some of their findings, there are demonstrated links between successful development and both a) solid business structure and 2) formal separation between the economic development managers and tribal government and politics. So having LLCs (or other entities) that are separate from tribal government can make for more nimble business operations, while still being organized under tribal ordinance and other structures. –Jana Ganion
- Q:** How does an LLC work with energy projects in coordination with a tribal government? How do Tribes and

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### LLCs work together?

**A:** Our LLC has managers who are authorized to make certain decisions, but only in compliance with our Articles of Organization and Articles of Operation (which provide checks and balances) and other operational requirements within a transparent structure. –Jana Ganion

**Q:** I want to network with other Tribes that are going through a strategic energy plan, or that have been successful in strategic energy planning. How can we be connected?

**A:** To find Tribes active in developing renewable energy projects, go to the [Tribal Energy Program Projects](#) website. Here you can see what Tribes are engaged by clicking the Project Type link and looking in the “First Steps” section.

Speaker Jana Ganion of Blue Lake Rancheria has also offered her expert networking resource to Tribes; feel free to contact her at [jganion@bluelakerancheria-nsn.gov](mailto:jganion@bluelakerancheria-nsn.gov). –National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)

**Q:** Have any Tribes considered earmarking the profits made from solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) and electric bills to further develop energy projects?

**A:** The Blue Lake Rancheria Tribe is researching ways to funnel all types of energy savings and revenue into more renewable energy infrastructure and development. –Jana Ganion

**Q:** How does Blue Lake Rancheria achieve zero emissions from biomass gasification?

**A:** Blue Lake Rancheria’s focus is zero criteria pollutant emissions, and this can be achieved through gasification technology that creates a certain, predictable gas composition, gas clean-up design, and flare technology. Depending upon the efficiency of the system and recirculation of gases within the system, the non-criteria-pollutant emissions (mainly CO<sub>2</sub>) may be dramatically reduced relative to larger and/or less efficient systems. –Jana Ganion)

**Q:** How large must a biofuels fleet be in order to make it worth converting vehicles over?

**A:** The size of a biofuels fleet does not impact the efficiency unless you are factoring in a convenient biofuels source. Having one biofuels vehicle is beneficial, unless the fuel source impacts proximity costs, billing, and payment efficiencies. Adding one alternative fuel at a time is efficient and makes an impact. –Randy Hunsberger, NREL

### Other Links to Helpful Resources

There are many resources available to help Tribes decide which renewable resource is best for them. These include:

- The DOE Office of Indian Energy offers [education and training](#) on project development and financing and renewable energy fundamentals and an [Energy Resource Library](#).
- Tribal-specific renewable energy curriculum developed by the DOE Office of Indian Energy can be accessed any time on the [National Training & Education Resource website](#).
- Basic information on the [types of renewable energy](#), as well as [tools and resources](#) for assessing renewable energy potential, are available on the NREL website.
- [Energy 101](#) videos developed by the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy provide short, basic overviews of the various types of renewable energy.



- The DOE Office of Indian Energy and Tribal Energy Program offer up to 40 hours of in-depth [technical assistance](#) for federally recognized Indian Tribes, tribal energy resource development organizations, and other organized tribal groups and communities to advance tribal renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

Answers are provided by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and webinar presenters. If you have additional questions, email [indianenergy@hq.doe.gov](mailto:indianenergy@hq.doe.gov). The Tribal Renewable Energy Webinar Series is sponsored by the DOE Office of Indian Energy, Tribal Energy Program, and Western Area Power Administration.

