



## Lake County Resources Initiative

*A Healthy Economy and Environment based on Sustainable Natural Resources, ensuring Quality of Life for Present and Future Generations*

My name is Jim Walls, I am Executive Director of Lake County Resources Initiative, a non-profit that works on natural resources primarily forestry and renewable energy.

The 2008 recession has impacted Lake County and the area is slowly recovering. Current unemployment rate in Lake County is 8.2%, still double the statewide average of 4%. According to the U.S. Census data, the median family income in Lake County is around \$40,000 with roughly 17% of the population below the poverty level.

In 2008 our goal was to be a net exporter of renewable energy by 2012. We have an opportunity in Lake County, as an economic development strategy, to develop every kind of renewable energy except ocean wave. LCRI has not achieved the 2012 goal but will in the next two years. We have come a long way: 7.5 MW of industrial solar has been installed, another 60+ MW is planned and there is a total of 111 MW on the books at Lake County Planning Department; 2.5 MW of geothermal energy installed and another two sites have been identified with 30 MW each potential; Lakeview School District and hospital installed geothermal heat in their facilities, saving 800 tons of carbon/year and \$100,000/year each in energy costs. An independent study done for the Ford Family Foundation by Richard Gardner, Ph.D. Economist, showed that in 2011 LCRI had assisted 22 homes, businesses and ranches to install renewables saving them \$125,200 annually or \$1.9 million over the life of the equipment. These 22 projects included ground source heat pumps, solar hot water, geothermal and solar electrical energy. The cornerstone of our original plan was biomass and geothermal but solar has dominated. While solar is not the permanent job creator, it is a construction job creator, as local contractors have installed most of the solar except for the electrical side which must be certified installers and it creates considerable new taxes. Currently solar is generating \$70,000 in new taxes and will in the next two years generate an additional \$420,000 new taxes in Lake County. We still need to have incentives to make geothermal and biomass viable. We have identified and proven, if installed geothermal and biomass would generate a minimum of 135 new jobs in Lake County.

We currently estimate that the renewables installed are offsetting 86,771 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or 30% of all the abiotic emissions in Lake County. We have identified additional renewable energy sources that will allow us to offset 93% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, if we can implement them all.

We are under PM 2.5 restrictions during the winter because of wood smoke. We have developed local strategies to solve this restriction: 1) Increase weatherization and energy efficiency to minimize the time wood is burned. 2) Provide tax and/or local incentives for installation of alternative heat/energy systems (geothermal, solar, gas) 3) Amend development codes to encourage alternative energy use and discourage wood use 4) Building code restrictions on new or remodels over a certain cost, uncertified stoves must be replaced with certified stoves or renewable energy alternatives 5) Local ordinance to require weatherization and insulation measures upon sale of a home.

Currently we are working with Sustainable Northwest and the Oregon Clean Energy Cooperative to install solar on many public building such as the Lake District Hospital, Lakeview Library, Lakeview Head Start, Warner Creek Correctional Facility, plus looking at others. We believe we can put solar on these and some other public facilities at near the same power cost or maybe even lower, they pay investors or the cooperative for that power for 10-14 years, then the facility owns the system and with a 25 year life span they have 11-15 years of free power. Where I live raising taxes is not a popular concept, another way of dealing with increasing costs is to reduce overhead costs.

Whatever the legislature can do to increase implementation of renewable energy is a winner for Oregon.