Central Coast Community Energy

PLUGGED IN
September 2026

Power for Good

Welcome to the September edition of 3CE's *Plugged In* newsletter! This month, 3CE's Policy Board approved an annual budget that invests in reliable, clean electricity and establishes a new Department of Energy Solutions to develop local energy projects. We're also continuing to advocate for fairness and transparency in statewide decisions that affect customer bills. In this edition, read about Santa Barbara County's new pathway for responsibly sited solar and battery storage, the launch of EV Launchpad, 3CE's new technical-assistance program during Drive Electric Month, and a simple way EV drivers can check whether a different rate plan could lower their charging costs based on their actual energy use.

In this newsletter, you'll find:

- **3CE's New Annual Budget and Department of Energy Solutions**
- **Our Continued Advocacy for CCA Customers**
- **A Path for More Local Solar in Santa Barbara County**
- **EV Launchpad and Drive Electric Month**
- **A Rate-Plan Check for EV drivers**
- **Drive Electric Month Events**
- **Upcoming Meetings**

3CE Board Approves Annual Budget, Creates Department of Energy Solutions



Members of 3CE's Policy and Operations Boards gathered for the agency's annual meeting on September 16.

Central Coast Community Energy's (3CE) Policy Board this month approved the agency's Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget, advancing investments in reliable, clean electricity while supporting stable customer rates across its five-county service area. The approximately $500 million annual budget is nearly 15% lower than last year's budget, driven primarily by lower energy costs.

A central feature of the budget is the creation of the Department of Energy Solutions. The new department will expand 3CE's ability to develop and own local energy projects, including EV charging stations, distributed generation, battery storage, and other projects that support cleaner energy, grid reliability, and long-term customer value.

The budget expands investment in programs that help customers optimize energy use and electrify transportation, buildings, and agricultural operations. Planned initiatives include continued transportation and building electrification incentives, and bi-directional charging offerings. 3CE is also developing a Virtual Power Plant Program to help customers shift energy use during periods of high energy demand and high cost.

3CE's FY 2026-27 budget supports service to more than 1.2 million people and 515,000 customer accounts in the cities and counties of Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz, serving approximately 95% of the region's total electricity demand. 3CE meets more than half of its retail electricity load through long-term contracts with clean and renewable energy projects, which relied on investment by the agency for their development.

State Rulemakers Reject CCA-Backed Reform Proposals



Two Sacramento decisions this month will impact the electricity bills of customers across the state.

On Sept. 17, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) voted unanimously against providing Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) customers value for Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) purchased prior to 2019. The decision allows the investor-owned utilities PG&E and SCE to retain the value of these RECs for their own generation customers without crediting the now-departed CCA customers who originally helped pay for them.

Further, as many CCAs had feared, Governor Newsom on Sept. 20 vetoed AB 1761, which would have required greater transparency into the resources and calculations underlying the Power Charge Indifference Adjustment (PCIA).

While these outcomes are disappointing, advocacy by Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) and other CCAs continues. Track 3B of the Commission's PCIA proceeding is scheduled to begin next year, offering another opportunity for 3CE and other stakeholders to pursue meaningful reform and to continue advocating for a fair application of "indifference": Customers should neither subsidize nor be subsidized by others based on their choice of electricity provider.

These efforts reflect 3CE's focus on lowering costs, advancing clean energy, and ensuring our customers' interests are represented in the decisions that affect their bills.

Santa Barbara County Opens a Path for More Local Solar

Santa Barbara County Supervisors voted on a streamlined pathway for utility scale solar in the county.

Santa Barbara County has adopted an ordinance creating a countywide permitting pathway for responsibly sited utility-scale solar and battery storage projects in its unincorporated areas. The new rules give landowners and developers greater clarity while addressing agricultural and environmental considerations.

By streamlining the permitting process, the ordinance can help make local clean-energy projects more viable. It also makes it easier to develop smaller systems, including microgrids that can strengthen resilience at critical public facilities.

The ordinance could help bring more locally generated clean energy to the Central Coast. As Santa Barbara County Supervisor Joan Hartmann put it, "Santa Barbara County has a significant opportunity to expand local renewable-energy resources, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and support the region's clean-energy future."

New Support for EVs and Charging During Drive Electric Month

Level 2 chargers at the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County help make EV charging more convenient for staff, volunteers, and visitors.

National Drive Electric Month is a chance to explore how electric transportation can reduce fuel costs, support cleaner air, and help communities build a more resilient energy future. Whether you are considering an electric vehicle for your household, planning chargers at your workplace or property, or preparing to electrify a public fleet, 3CE offers resources to help make the transition more achievable.

Beginning October 1, 3CE will roll out EV Launchpad, a new no-cost technical assistance program that helps eligible customers plan and develop EV charging and transportation projects. The program builds on 3CE's Plan Your Fleet service, which sunsets September 30, and expands support for cities, counties, commercial properties, and multifamily housing providers.
EV Launchpad can help participants:

- Assess site feasibility
- Develop long-term fleet-electrification plans
- Plan and optimize EV charging for fleet, public, workplace, multifamily, or other eligible projects
- Access engineering and site-design support
- Identify potential funding opportunities for vehicles and charging equipment
- Resources to move your project from concept to installation

EV Launchpad complements 3CE's existing Charge Your Fleet rebates for Cities and Counties which provide direct incentives for EV charging equipment and installation. It is designed to help organizations understand their options and move projects from an early idea toward a well-informed implementation plan.

For residential customers, 3CE's Electrify Your Ride program provides rebates for qualifying new and used electric vehicles, Level 2 home chargers and installation, and certain electrical work needed to support charging. Residential customers may receive one EV rebate per household and one charger rebate per site address, with an additional rebate for bi-directional chargers.

Learn more about EV Launchpadand Electrify Your Ride on our website.

Using Your Own EV Charger? A Different Rate Plan Could Lower Your Bill



Charging an EV at home? The right electricity rate plan could help lower your costs.

Charging an EV at home can use a lot of electricity, and choosing the right rate plan from your delivery provider can help offset that added cost. Some customers can save money by switching to a time-of-use (TOU) plan, which offers a variable rate depending when you use power during the day. If you can schedule your EV to charge during off-peak hours, a TOU plan could be a good fit.

PG&E and SCE both offer customers online tools that compare the cost of your actual energy use across available rate plans, including plans for EV owners; for example, PG&E's EV2-A plan is least expensive between midnight and 3 p.m.

Take a few minutes to learn if a different rate plan could lower your bill – you can see your estimated savings before making a change.

COMPARE PG&E RATE PLANS COMPARE SCE RATE PLANS

Explore EVs During Drive Electric Month

Curious about electric vehicles? Drive Electric Month is a great time to see EVs up close, ask questions about charging and ownership, and hear from people who drive them. Check out one of these upcoming events in your area:

Second Saturday EVs, Art and Community Resources	Watsonville	Oct. 10 12-4 pm	Watsonville Plaza	https://evsforeveryone.org/
Webinar: All About Electric Vehicles	Santa Barbara	Oct. 23 12-12:45pm	Online	Register Here

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Upcoming 3CE Board Meetings

Central Coast Community Energy encourages public participation in agency meetings, held in person and on ZOOM with available dial-in options. Attendees may provide live public comments remotely through Zoom or submit them in advance via email at publiccomments@3ce.org. Sign up to receive public board notices that include meeting details.

Dates and Livestream Info
