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## For Immediate Release

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### MARIN COUNTY FAIR THREATENS WOMEN'S ENERGY MATTERS' FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS

*Grassroots organization prevented from giving information about major fair sponsor*

*PG&E impotent "Green" programs.*

**San Rafael, CA-** The Fourth of July season is an ironic or perhaps telling backdrop for an awkward exchange between Women's Energy Matters and the Marin County Fair, which advertises itself as "the greenest county fair on earth." The actions of the Marin County Fair Officials have Women's Energy Matters, a grassroots organization based in Marin County and others questioning "Is Pacific Gas and Electric eliminating public discourse on Community Choice Aggregation and Marin Clean Energy with its big bucks?"

Women's Energy Matters cites the incident on July 2<sup>nd</sup> when two of its teenage interns who were passing out brochures at the fair were told to stop and were threatened with arrest by a Marin County Fair Official. The leaflet's questioned the validity of Pacific Gas and Electric's claim to be "green" and promoted Marin Clean Energy, the county's new plan to provide Marin County residents with 50% renewable energy at the same rate as PG&E, which currently has less than 12% renewables.

PG&E purchased the first booth inside the entrance gate and is featured in fair advertising as a "Community Partner."

"It's unconscionable that here in America during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July season, a grassroots organization cannot give out information in a public venue," said Barbara George. "Women's Energy Matters is working to focus public attention on the debates between PG&E and Marin Clean Energy at eleven city council meetings in Marin." WEM has provided videos of the meetings at its website [www.womensenergymatters.org](http://www.womensenergymatters.org) to help get the word out about the choice Marin residents will have if the councils of various cities agree to the Marin Clean Energy Plan.

"WEM has videotaped the meetings because there has been very little media covering these historic meetings that could result in Marin Clean Energy taking the lead, nationally, in countering global warming by cutting greenhouses gas emissions from conventional power plants," added George. "I'm concerned about the state of our country where it now seems true public discourse can be bought out by advertising dollars and a group of teens are threatened with arrest when they have their first experience exercising freedom of speech, a First Amendment right."

Women's Energy Matters disclosed that fair officials proposed an alternative the following day. The group of young people would be confined to a small area outside the entrance of the fair, and were not allowed to approach people entering and exiting the fair.

"This is unacceptable," George stated. "The Fair is preventing us from using a time-honored method for grassroots groups to deliver their message by handing out fliers to passersby. The children politely offered

the information to each person, saying, ‘This is about Marin Clean Energy, 50% renewables and no rate increase.... PG&E has less than 12% renewables.’” “ It’s important to be able to challenge companies that are suddenly declaring themselves green, when the reality doesn’t match the advertising,” said George. PG&E is opposing Marin Clean Energy and stating in public governmental meetings and in paid advertising that fifty percent of its energy is “green,” but few people are aware almost half of PG&E’s so called fifty percent “green energy” is nuclear power,” said George. “We can’t afford to sleep through this one. We must pay attention to this kind of glaring discrepancy.”

Women’s Energy Matters has requested fair officials to disclose how much money PG&E spent to have a big booth at the entrance of the fair and to be a sponsor. WEM believes PG&E has greatly increased its advertising and public relations expenditures in Marin County this year to falsely portray itself as “green,” and may be in violation of state law requiring utilities to “cooperate” with Community Choice. The group says it may be several weeks before the details are known. In the meantime WEM and other groups active on the issue are urging the public to attend meetings and learn about the issue from their websites.

Dates on upcoming meetings about Marin Clean Energy can be found at [www.marincleanenergy.info](http://www.marincleanenergy.info).

### **Key Factors**

Marin Clean Energy will focus on purchasing energy for Marin County, increasing energy efficiency and increasing the amount of renewable energy in the mix. PG&E will continue to provide electricity transmission and distribution and customers will be billed by PG&E.

PG&E has notified the California Public Utilities Commission that it cannot meet its state mandated goals to provide 20% renewable energy by 2010. The company has also achieved less than half of its energy efficiency goals in recent years and has actively lobbied the California Public Utilities Commission to decrease the goals.

Marin Clean Energy sole focus will be Marin residents. Marin Clean Energy will purchase only renewable energy and Marin Clean Energy will provide renewable energy at or below the prices that PG&E presently provides for electricity.

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### **About Women’s Energy Matters**

Women’s Energy Matters (WEM) is a network of women and men who approach energy issues from a woman’s point of view. WEM works for a rapid transition to an efficient, renewable energy system, in order to promote healthy communities and ecosystems and improve international relations. WEM also celebrates the ways women have used their own energy through the ages to work for the public good. Current areas of focus include: Community Choice, Energy Efficiency, and Environmental Justice. See: [www.womensenergymatters.org](http://www.womensenergymatters.org).