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CVEP trade mission takes green Coachella Valley to Europe



Wesley Ahlgren, Chief Operating Officer for The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP) recently returned from a whirlwind trade mission to Europe helping to promote and brand the Coachella Valley as the renewable energy and clean technology capital for the entire United States.

Selected from a small group of 20 community representatives, Ahlgren, along with **Robert Hargreaves**, attorney at Best, Best & Krieger LLP, were the only individuals from California to be invited. Accompanied by 20 clean technology business leaders, this first-of-its-kind mission was arranged by the U.S. Department of Commerce in order to advance U.S. clean technology exports, as well



as promote the U.S. as an attractive choice for direct foreign investment.

Clearly, the inclusion of CVEP representatives to such an exclusive mission signals recognition by international business and industry leaders that the Coachella Valley offers tremendous opportunity. And now, thanks to Ahlgren and CVEP, many other organizations, representatives and countries have a better understanding of the key components that make the valley a likely strong leader in the clean technology future of our country.

First on the agenda was attendance at Pollutec, Europe's leading environmental technology show in Lyon, France. During four days, Ahlgren and Hargreaves met with dozens of groups, business leaders and government representatives. According to Ahlgren, one of the more interesting connections made was with a group named "erai-enterprise rhone-alps international," which is a sort of counterpart to CVEP. Erai currently has an office in Atlanta, is actively engaged in bringing European companies to the U.S., and has expressed a strong interest in California, including potentially the Coachella Valley.

Ahlgren also commented on meetings with the French Ambassador as well as the Chamber of Commerce in a number of "mixer" type networking events. The good

news was that, "Everyone was really interested in California," said Ahlgren. He added, "We have an advantage because everyone knows where we are. Plus, they see California as a land of opportunity and on the cutting edge of clean technology."

Also made clear was that in comparison to other representatives around the United States, the Coachella Valley was the only area that contained four renewable energy opportunities: solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. In sharp contrast, other delegates representing other regions typically offered only one. According to Ahlgren, "What I found was that our region has a greater concentration of different types of renewable energy than any other."

The final few days of the mission were spent in Brussels, Belgium. There the delegates attended meetings at the U.S. Embassy and as well a NATO Cleantech roundtable. Other meetings included gatherings with major Belgian companies, ambassador receptions and another group named AGORIA, similarly established to network clean tech companies. Ahlgren said, "Those folks over there are looking for connections here and we are going to try to facilitate as many as we can." He continued, "We have a huge opportunity to make this region a renewable energy center if we can come together in the next couple of years."

"For five days it was a really great trip," said Ahlgren in conclusion. "Really eye-opening."

Ahlgren was quick to point out the three major accomplishments of the trip focused on the connections that were made:

- Of highest importance were the businesses that they connected with which are looking to U.S. markets for investment and/or expansion.
- Next were the connections made with counterparts like AGORIA and erai.
- Finally, the friendships and relationships forged with other delegates will further help to promote our region and expand best practices information sharing.

Inspired by the knowledge that our region alone offers the unique blend of all four renewable energy potentials, Ahlgren plans to "run with it!"

Even better is the fact that the Coachella Valley offers such opportunity along with such a high quality of life. Working closely with CVEP Partners and the Palm Springs Desert Resort Communities Convention and Visitor's Authority (CVA), Ahlgren says CVEP plans to use their newly acquired relationships and knowledge to push the Coachella Valley even further as a renewable energy center for the country. Not only are they striving to bring more business and jobs to our area, but like their motto says, their end goal is creating a "climate for success."

January 2011 Coming Green Events

- January 12, 2011
Desert Horticultural Society
Quarterly Membership Meeting
Location: The Living Desert
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
All welcome.
- January 13, 2011
UCR Lecture Series:
"Climate Change & Biodiversity in the CV"
Location: UCR PD Graduate Center
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
No charge but please pre-register.
- January 17, 2011
CVAG Free Tire Recycling Program
Location : City Hall, Cathedral City
8:00 – 11:00 am
- January 19–20, 2011
7th Annual Cleantech Conference:
"Fostering Innovation & Investment Opportunities
in Clean Technologies"
Location: Renaissance Esmeralda
2 day event.
Fee to attend.
- January 20, 2011
CVEP Renewable Energy Roundtable:
"Distributed Generation, Feed-In Tariff, and AB 811"
Location: UCR Palm Desert
7:30 – 9:00 a.m.
No charge to attend.
- January 25, 2011
Sustainable Film Series: "Vanishing of the Bees"
Location: Palm Springs Library Learning Center
6:00 p.m.
No charge to attend.
- January 26, 2011
Workshop: Water-Smart Landscape Professional
Location : UCR Palm Desert Graduate Center
8:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fee to attend.

For more events and complete details visit the
Event Calendar at CoachellaValleyGreen.com.

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About the Authors:

Kathy Gottberg is a published author, business owner and real estate broker. Thom Gottberg is a commercial real estate broker with a focus on green and sustainable practices. Together they write and co-create CoachellaValleyGreen.com as a resource for the valley.

