

Forum to raise green issues

PANEL: Inland challenges will shape a discussion by city officials and environmentalists.

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Some of the Inland region's top environmental activists will get a chance Thursday night to ask elected officials from three major Inland cities about challenges facing Riverside County.

Topics likely to be discussed include the fast-growing region's air pollution, which ranks among the worst in the nation, as well as the challenges of providing water to new residents when groundwater pollution limits the available supply, protecting endangered species while allowing new construction and creating more open space as more people crowd into the area.

Scott Regberg, who has produced similar televised discussions about the environment in San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles counties, said the event's purpose is to have various environmental representatives shape the discussion by raising questions on topics they are familiar with.

"The idea is to raise the public consciousness about environmental issues," he said.

Called The Greening of Riverside County, Thursday's discussion will offer a panel that includes Terry Tamminen, former California environmental secretary under Gov. Schwarzenegger and a former resident of Crestline in the San Bernardino Mountains.

The event is sponsored by Southern California Gas and is open to the public. It is expected to be televised at a later date by Charter Communications.

The city officials on the panel will be Corona Councilman Steve Nolan, Hemet Mayor Robin Lowe and Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge and Councilman Art Gage, Regberg said.

The environmentalists on the panel will be Jane Block, a community activist affiliated with several environmental groups; Monica Bond, wildlife biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity, which has an office in Joshua Tree; Pete Dangermond, executive director of the Riverside Land Conservancy; Terry Wold of the San Geronio chapter of the Sierra Club; and Penny Newman, a veteran activist known for her battle to force the state to clean up the Stringfellow acid pits, a Superfund site near Glen Avon in northwestern Riverside County.

"Certainly one of the hot issues is the goods movement and this approach of local officials jumping on board to be the logistics center and not understanding what that means," Newman said.

"We need to understand the impacts" of attracting more trucks and trains to the region, she said.

"As an area that already has some of the highest air pollution, it doesn't make sense that this is the economic engine that we would pick."

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