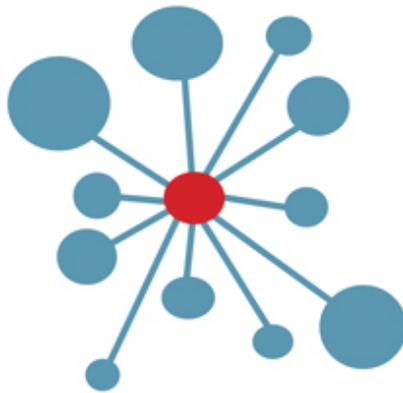




NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

*Congress is not in session and will return after Labor Day.*

### **Proposed Rule for Expediting Renewable Power Development on Public Land**

The Obama Administration is close to finalizing a proposed rule to expedite the approval of renewable energy projects. Since taking office, the president has begun the approval process for renewable energy development projects across 216,356 acres of public lands. Despite these steps, very few acres of public land have actually been developed due to red tape like time-consuming environmental studies and costly permitting processes. With this proposed rule, the administration will “encourage developers to bid on government-selected tracts with gusty winds and intense sunlight that are pre-cleared of major environmental conflicts.”

The rule will allow the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) to lease public land through a competitive bid process for renewable energy projects in the same way that it does for oil and gas projects. Currently, DOI uses right-of-way permits for these types of projects, which unlike a lease, can be easily overturned or dismantled. **Environmentalists** view the leasing option as a way to guarantee the land for renewable energy development. However, this proposed rule is not being praised by everyone and many **developers** worry the competitive bid process will only raise the cost of development by increasing expenses like rent and megawatt capacity charges. The administration maintains that the potential higher costs will allow for faster permitting and while preserving responsible development.

The new rule would help to streamline the permitting process on public lands. Local governments can expedite solar permitting in their own jurisdictions by implementing best practices such as online permitting and permitting checklists or templates. For resources on permitting best practices for solar, visit the SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership’s **resource** reference guide or **download** NARC’s Regional Solar Deployment Handbook.

### **Volkswagen Settlement Details**

From two related settlements this summer, Volkswagen (VW) agreed to spend up to \$10.03 billion in consumer compensation and \$4.7 billion to mitigate pollution and invest in

supporting zero-emission vehicle technology. The emission reduction program is part of the settlement from the *Clean Air Act* violations and requires VW to fund projects that reduce emissions of NOx across the country. The funds will be administered by a trustee and beneficiaries may include states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Indian tribes. VW is also required to invest \$2 billion in advancing green vehicle technology. Over half of this money will go towards a national plan that VW will develop with input from cities, states, Indian tribes, and federal agencies. Final approval of the settlement will come this fall and details on environmental mitigation and zero emission vehicle investments are still forming. The **Partial Consent Decree** is available online and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released a list of **FAQs for Beneficiaries to the VW Mitigation Trust Agreement** that provides more information on timing and requirements of the emissions reduction program.

### **National Preparedness Month**

September is the first month of fall, when most of the kids head back to school, and the traditional month that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) celebrates preparedness. Due to the success of last year's theme, *Don't Wait, Communicate. Make Your Emergency Plan Today*, FEMA continues the same sentiment but with an emphasis on preparedness for youth- especially teens, older adults, and people with disabilities. Each week of National Preparedness Month has a designated theme:

- Week 1 (August 28-September 3): Promote National Preparedness Month
- Week 2 (September 4-10): Preparing Family and Friends
- Week 3 (September 11-17): Preparing Through Service
- Week 4 (September 18-24): Individual Preparedness
- Week 5 (September 25-30): Lead-up to National PrepareAthon! Day

More information about each of these themes is available on **Ready.gov/september**, where you can also find social media content, 2016 NPM logo, graphics, and more to share with your communities.

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Register Your ICC Governmental Member Voting Representatives by 9/19**

NARC is working with the Energy Efficiency Codes Coalition (EECC) and local governments nationwide to alert you and your jurisdiction to an opportunity to vote for more efficient buildings in this fall's 2018 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) update. The IECC is updated every three years in a year-long process that culminates with electronic voting by Governmental Member Voting Representatives (GMVRs) of the International Code Council (ICC). Local governments and their councils of governments can do their part to strengthen the IECC by:

- September 19: **Registering members to vote** and securing voting credentials as ICC Governmental Member Voting Representatives.
- October 19-25: Testifying and casting important procedural "hand votes" in-person at ICC's Public Comment Hearings in Kansas City. These important votes set the agenda for November's on-line voting.
- November 8-21: Casting your on-line ballot with **cdpACCESS** for code measures that improve efficiency and prevent rollbacks) during the on-line voting period. These votes determine the new IECC.

For more information, visit <http://energyefficientcodes.com/power/>.

### **Advancing Sustainable Energy Planning in California's San Joaquin Valley**

The Sustainable Energy Roadmap (SER) project offers technical assistance to the 70 incorporated jurisdictions in California's San Joaquin Valley for developing a roadmap for achieving energy efficiency, renewable energy, environmental justice and transportation and land use goals. The SER project is funded by **California's Strategic Growth Council**. Participating jurisdictions are provided with a \$5,000.00 stipend for staff time committed to the SER project. Upon joining, SER program partners work with the jurisdiction to identify existing sustainability policies and ordinances and any related gaps. Together, they discuss and identify specific objectives that meet the jurisdiction's needs and then develop an online publicly-accessible "**roadmap**" for achieving

those goals.

Since 2015, fourteen jurisdictions are actively participating in the SER program. NARC works with the **Colorado Energy Group** (CEG) to help SER jurisdictions with sustainability-related technical assistance, which has included: developing water efficiency ordinances and policies, participating in a solar photovoltaic panel purchasing collaborative, considering ordinances for electric vehicles and electric vehicle supply equipment, and arranging financial assistance through grants, rebates, and incentives.

Additionally, through this project, CEG published the **Large-Scale Solar and Agricultural Lands** whitepaper which included a nationwide review of local ordinance language to help San Joaquin Valley jurisdictions and others balance the increasing demand for solar energy development on or near agricultural land.

The SER program partners include: **San Joaquin Valley Regional Policy Council**, San Rafael-based non-profit **Strategic Energy Innovations** (SEI), the **Madera County Transportation Commission**, the **City of Visalia**, Santa Clara-based **Optony Inc.**, and the **Colorado Energy Group**. For more information, contact **George Burmeister** with CEG.

### **NLC Opioid Epidemic Resources**

The National League of Cities (NLC) and the National Association of Counties (NACo) announced the formation of the **City-County National Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic** earlier this year to address the nation's opioid and heroine abuse crisis. In addition to this task force, NLC has published several blog posts addressing this national issue titled **What Cities Need to Conquer Opioid and Prescription Abuse**, **A Window into the Opioid Crisis in Kentucky**, and **7 Tools to Fight the Opioid Epidemic**.

## **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

### **Brownfields Plan Receives FPZA 2016 Outstanding Redevelopment Project Award**

The Florida Planning and Zoning Association (FPZA) Awards Committee recognized the Central Florida Regional Planning Council's (CFRPC) **East Lake Parker/West North Combee Brownfields Plan** as the 2016 Outstanding Redevelopment Project recipient. CFRPC received an EPA Brownfields Areawide Planning Grant to develop an areawide plan for the blighted and heavy industrial East Lake Parker-West North Combee area (in Lakeland, Polk County, Florida). The plan recognizes the development limitations due in part to properties considered to be brownfields while creating specific strategies to make revitalization a reality. Developed through extensive community-based involvement, local government collaboration, and partnerships with private property owners, the plan is the foundation for future assessment, cleanup, and reuse of brownfields properties promoting areawide revitalization and economic development.

## **FEATURED JOBS**

***View full list of jobs!***

### **Natural Resources Director**

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

### **Data Analyst**

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI

### **Senior Regional Planner**

Central Texas Council of Governments, Belton, TX

### **Regional Transportation Director**

Alamo Area Council of Governments, San Antonio, TX

## **EVENTS**

***View full list of events!***

### **Community Revitalization Approaches in Gary and Detroit**

September 20, 3:00 - 4:30 PM ET

This webinar is a part of EPA's Sustainable and Healthy Communities Seminar Series and will focus on EPA Region 5 and community revitalization in Gary, IN and Detroit, MI.

**NARC's 2016 Executive Directors Conference and Board Retreat**

EDC: September 18-20 – South Bend, IN

Board Retreat: September 20-21 – South Bend, IN

Join NARC and the Michiana Area Council of Governments for the 2016 Executive Directors Conference in South Bend, Indiana. This conference brings executive directors, deputy directors, and senior staff together to network, share best practices, and explore opportunities for strengthening professional capacity and development.

**CONTACT US**

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