

Synthesis of Participant Responses to Focus Questions
Energy Forum 2009: Challenges and Possibilities for Alabama
October 13-14, 2009 – Birmingham Botanical Gardens

The Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama
www.interfaithenvironmental.org
Engaging faith and science to sustain and enhance the life of Earth.

Tuesday evening October 13 – keynote speaker Stan Meiburg, Ph.D.,
Acting Director of Region 4, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Dr. Stan Meiburg's Eight Principles

1. Invest in information
2. Base statements on science and the law
3. Seek to understand other's view better than your own
4. Explore interests not positions
5. Create opportunities for mutual gain wherever possible
6. Pursue conservation and energy efficiency first!
7. Take confidence from past successes
8. Promote an ethic of stewardship

Wednesday October 14 – all-day *Energy Forum 2009*

Question 1: What will we have as a community when Alabama takes the lead in energy efficiency? (AM session)

Our **Vision** for Energy and Water Efficiency in Alabama

Our efforts to educate our citizens and our public officials about the benefit of Alabama's leadership in energy and water conservation and efficiency built a stronger, more engaged and better connected community.

Our wise use of our rich and varied resources led to healthier people with a better quality of life and a vibrant and sustainable economy.

Our beautiful and diverse state is recognized at home and around the world as a leading destination for new residents, tourism and responsible economic growth.

Question 2: What do Alabama citizens (a) need to know and (b) want to know about energy efficiency? How do they want to know it? (AM session)

We need to know:

- Information that is objective, trustworthy, not part of a political agenda, and that starts early in the education process.

- What our resources are, where our energy comes from, and the full life cycle costs of our energy use.
- The impacts of no action and the benefits of energy efficiency for ourselves and for the larger community
- That energy efficiency is doable and that our financial future and security depends on our acting.
- That change can be easy - not a sacrifice - and has health, welfare and security benefits for a better life
- The personal financial costs, savings and incentives for energy efficiency and the realities of economic disparities.
- How to apply what we know, live in an efficient space, and be happy with it.

We want to know:

- That personal actions matter, aren't insignificant, and can be positive changes for a good life.
- How this affects my household now - what are the costs in time, effort and money and what are the benefits.
- What are the best simple, energy and money-saving steps for the long and short run.
- How to apply actionable items as a family and community.

How do we want to know it?

- Daily tips, simple, clear, practical, acceptable and focused on \$
- From news and PSAs, brief videos, radio talk shows - designed for different populations
- From neighbors and friends or the pulpit - and from observing changes in the business community.
- Integrate into education from start to finish, with students bringing it home.
- Feedback from the utility - pricing alerts or meter showing price and use.
- Provide codes and mandates and align goals of landlords and tenants.
- Pick icons and make desired changes visible, like solar panels on Vulcan.
- Couch it in a vision for an improved future.

Question 3: What are the greatest opportunities and obstacles for Alabama in energy efficiency right now? (PM session)

Opportunities for Alabama in energy efficiency right now:

- **Culture of Independence:** Thanks to our culture of independence, we can open the mindsets of regulators, builders, and individuals to new ways of conserving and using water and energy.
- **Room for Development:** Our relative 'undevelopment' allows room for support of parks, green spaces and water and energy-smart development.
- **Room for Energy Improvement:** We can work toward higher standings on national energy efficiency measures - with weatherization, energy audits, energy use changes - among other options.
- **Incentives for Investment:** We can use incentives - like stimulus money and eco-industrial parks - combined with code changes to create energy and transportation and transit investments.

- **Governance & Cooperation:** Use our good access to legislators and governance structures to work with key players in partnering and building on symbiotic relationships (e.g. Joint Permanent Legislative Committee on Energy and on Water and other groups).
- **Energetic Education – Community:** Provide quantitative information and competitive opportunities for people to help themselves and to share with congregations, neighborhoods and other groups.
- **Energetic Education – Students:** Tap the energy and interests of students with information for their formal and informal forums and competitions or fun opportunities for sustainable choices (e.g. food waste).
- **Local Focus:** We can eat local, buy local, recycle local - by building on efforts already underway with fun and effective community outreach (see I CAN Cincinnati).
- **Technology:** Use technology wisely - from LED traffic lights to designing all products for less packaging and easy disassembly.
- **Focus on E³ - Energy, Economy, Environment:** Recognize the linkages and work with opportunities for positive feedback to be found in improving each sector - energy, economy, environment.
- **Partnership, not competition**

Obstacles for Alabama in energy efficiency right now:

- **The Economy:** The current economy, our poverty rate, and lack of jobs for the poor make it hard to focus on energy issues.
- **Energy Prices:** Cheap energy and water, seen as an economic necessity, provide no incentive for customers to conserve.
- **Rate Structure:** The rate structure encourages use; the utility has no incentive to promote conservation and sell less energy unless income is decoupled from sales.
- **Attitudes:** Due to the attitudes and mindset of the populace, politicians and regulators there is no political will or sense of urgency about the need to change.
- **Cost:** Initial costs of efficiency improvements are a barrier.
- **Leadership:** Parents don't lead by example and governments are inefficient and sometimes corrupt.

Question 4: What projects or collaborations would best support building participation in energy efficiency? (PM session)

In all actions, link Energy, Environment, Economy - E³ Schools

- Work with clubs, like Key Clubs.
- Competitions among schools or classes to meet efficiency goals - possibly use student videos for results.
- Find and adapt projects that have had large impact elsewhere that help educate students, teachers and parents.

Congregations

- Choose projects that have had a big impact elsewhere and educate beyond the congregation.

Community

- Home sales should require ratings for efficiency - Home Energy Rating System (HERS) is one.
- Community gardens and green roofs.
- Create an eco-industrial park in Birmingham.
- Develop a community brand and tell the story - like I CAN in Cincinnati (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUTMoHhOfoI>)

Legislature/ State Administration

- Use top down approach: work for better legislation on energy codes (buildings, appliances, transportation).
- Participate in the Joint Permanent Legislative Committees on Energy and on Water.
- Create an Alabama Energy Board (in addition to Energy Division of Alabama Department of Economic and Community Development).

Inter-organizational linkages

- Create conversations across agencies and collaboration among organizations.

Personal

- Participate in those conversations where we have something to learn.

Question 5: What next steps we can do will accomplish the greatest outcomes? (PM session)

- Set up work groups.
 1. Benchmarking
 2. Alabama Energy Bowl
 3. Transmit to churches and home
 4. Industry & Business collaboration – water efficiency = energy efficiency – incentives for energy/water efficiency
- Prioritize topics from *Energy Forum 2009*, and be realistic in setting goals.
- Take evaluation tools into our homes, workplaces, faith communities, and schools, and implement energy/water efficiency practices. Spread the word and set the example.
- Support and follow The Birmingham Charter.
- Collaborate in establishing an Alabama Energy Board.
- Benchmarking is integral to our accomplishments
 - Utilities
 - Community
 - Congregations
 - Transportation—bike lanes

Energy Forum 2009 Work Groups are now being formed and include the following:

Benchmarking

This group will focus on how businesses can establish a baseline, and create goals and tangible objectives for achieving energy efficiency. It will also look to create best practices and share these strategies with each other. The group will look at choosing a formula so organizations and business know where they are and how they can achieve an optimal baseline that is energy efficient and economically favorable. They will provide a baseline that can be used by all of the Work Groups.

Faith & Home - Energy / Water Efficiency at Home and in Faith Communities

This group will focus on how to get the message to the faith communities by finding resources that already exist and exploring how to share and put this information in available locations. The group will determine guidelines, set goals and explore existing programs, including green certification for faith communities. They will find actionable ways to implement energy / water conservation and efficiency ideas in faith communities and in youth education.

Students / New Generation Energy

This group will focus on determining those projects already occurring in colleges and high schools and what can be done to expand the conversation on energy / water conservation and efficiency. The group may include students from area high schools, colleges and universities as well as superintendents and teachers.

Water / Energy Efficiency – industrial / business collaborations

This group will focus on identifying major water users in the region and developing productive strategies for water savings and efficiencies that make the connection between water conservation / efficiency / reuse, and energy efficiency and savings. The group will determine those contacts already involved in the conversation and engage others. Guidelines and benchmarking will be included in the work of this group.

Website / Resources / Information

This group will focus on keeping the website current and providing scientifically accurate information and resources for all of our Work Groups.

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