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JOURNALIST

La Rumorosa, in México's Baja California state, owes its name to the whispering wind heard through gaps in volcanic rock walls. There, at the peak of the Sierra Juárez mountain range, tens of measurement towers signal wind generation development being driven mostly by US state California's appetite for green energy. Furthermore, Los Angeles' mayor and federal power utility CFE just signed an agreement for power supply from the Cerro Prieto geothermal plant - one of the largest in the world – starting in 2010.

The sale of clean energy from Baja California to California looks to be the start of a trend that could stretch along the two countries' border. Growing prospects for regional climate change initiatives, a US emissions reduction bill, and a post-Kyoto agreement to which the US could be a signatory all bode well for such exchange. The Baja California case demonstrates that renewable generation projects will follow the demand for alternatives. The state government says the majority of power generated will come from renewable sources by 2012.

On a smaller scale, it has a pilot solar project in the community Valle de las Misiones, where 220 low-income homes have been equipped with 1kW rooftop photovoltaic panels, saving nearly 50% on power bills; however, most residents still use energy inefficiently. This problem is hardly limited to Valle de Las Misiones or Baja California. Energy efficiency is becoming part of the human dialogue, but many remain either unaware or daunted by larger upfront costs.

Baja California's government is now trying to breathe new life into the project. It is analyzing consumption and working with residents to provide an understanding of how best to benefit from their solar panels and the efficient use of power. The state energy committee sees this type of project as part of the broader solution.

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