

HISTORY of KyotoUSA and the HELIOS Project

[KyotoUSA](#) was a grassroots environmental organization formed in November 2004 by Berkeley residents Tom and Jane Kelly. , The organization received fiscal sponsorship from The Sequoia Foundation, a California non-profit organization.

The name KyotoUSA was chosen to convey a message to the national and international community that citizens of the United States shared their concerns about climate change and would act locally to address its causes - despite the U.S. Government's refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol or to make any meaningful effort to reduce its the greenhouse gas emissions.

The initial mission of KyotoUSA was to encourage cities across the United States to formally adopt the principles of the [Kyoto Protocol](#) and commit to making significant reductions in their own greenhouse gas emissions.

An additional goal was to publicize KyotoUSA's grassroots-based approach to local and regional greenhouse gas emissions reductions and to encourage others with greater capacity, e.g. former [Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels](#), [City and Borough of Juneau](#), [Earthjustice and the Rainforest Action Network](#), [California Climate Action Network](#), to magnify the idea and spread its message across the U.S.

On January 18, 2005 KyotoUSA succeeded in having the [Berkeley City Council](#) unanimously [endorse the Kyoto Protocol via Resolution No. 62,783-N.S.](#) and pledge to exceed the emissions reductions laid out in the Kyoto Protocol. KyotoUSA successfully lobbied other Bay Area cities, e.g., [Santa Cruz](#) to take similar actions. In Spring 2005, [Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels](#) adopted KyotoUSA's Kyoto Protocol endorsement concept as the basis for a resolution he submitted to the [U.S. Conference of Mayors](#) for the purpose of establishing the [U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement](#) which 1,066 U.S. Mayors joined by late 2009.

On February 14, 2005, KyotoUSA held a carbon neutral press conference at City Hall in Berkeley entitled "[Berkeley's Valentine to the Planet](#)". The solar-powered event celebrated the February 16, 2005 [implementation of the Kyoto Protocol](#) as well as local cities' commitments to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The press conference sent a message to the international community that U.S. citizens and their cities were joining the effort to address climate change. The keynote speaker was United Nations Ambassador and Vice Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), [Enele Sopoaga](#) representing the island nation of [Tuvalu](#) in the South Pacific. [Sheila Watt-Cloutier](#), Chair of the [Inuit Circumpolar Conference](#) sent a heartfelt [letter of appreciation](#) stating:

"I believe that we find ourselves at the very cusp of a defining moment in the history of the planet. The earth is melting and we must all come together to do the right thing to address Climate Change. Global

Warming connects us all – from the Arctic where I live, to the vibrant City of Berkeley, to the Pacific Islands of Tuvalu. The connections are not indirect either -- as the Arctic melts the islands of the Pacific flood.”

In April 2005, at the invitation of [Nobel Peace prize nominee and 2015 Right Livelihood award winner, Sheila Watt-Cloutier](#), KyotoUSA participated in a 3-day climate conference hosted by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Iqaluit/Nunavut, Canada. The conference presented both traditional and scientific findings on the impacts of climate change in the Arctic. The event entitled “[Arctic Wisdom](#)” included a human aerial drawing created by the Inuit and conference participants on frozen Frobisher Bay depicting the words “[Arctic Warning](#).”

Local Programs

In 2006, KyotoUSA turned its attention to supporting visible, local projects that all residents could participate in and established [HELIOS – Helios Energy Lights Our Schools](#), a no cost program established to assist California’s public schools in evaluating the potential for installing renewable energy systems in their parking lots and on school rooftops. The initial effort resulted in the installation of a 100 kilowatt (kW) solar system on [Washington Elementary School](#) in Berkeley. That project attracted the attention of the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) (DOE) that encouraged KyotoUSA to apply for a [Solar America Showcase grant](#) in 2009. Via its fiscal sponsor, Sequoia Foundation, KyotoUSA submitted a successful proposal on behalf of three local school districts: Berkeley ([BUSD](#)), Oakland ([OUSD](#)), and West Contra Costa ([WCCUSD](#)). The DOE technical assistance grant enabled KyotoUSA to work with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory ([NREL](#)) in Colorado and its school district partners to research and develop the components of an individualized [Solar Master Plan \(SMP\)](#) for each school district.

On November 9, 2011 KyotoUSA held a [press conference](#) at SunPower Corp. headquarters in Richmond, CA to celebrate the issuance of the completed Solar Master Plans for BUSD, OUSD, and WCCUSD and the completion of an SMP template that could be used by other school districts. NREL published a [case study](#) on the program. The DOE Solar America Showcase grant led to the installation of a number of photovoltaic (PV) systems: by summer 2017, BUSD had installed solar on seven schools with two more in the pipeline totaling approximately 750 kW, [OUSD installed solar on 16 schools](#) (3.6 MW), and [WCCUSD completed installations on 37 schools](#) (6.3 MW) for a total of 10.65 MW for all three districts.

In 2015, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) [contracted](#) with the Sequoia Foundation/KyotoUSA to reach out to all the public school districts in the nine Bay Area counties to determine their interest in receiving a no-cost “[Solar Sampler](#)”, a basic solar feasibility study for two of their schools that could then be transformed into a full Solar Master Plan for their school district. During the contract period, KyotoUSA reached out to 89 public

school districts providing Solar Samplers to 50 districts and full Solar Master Plans to 10 districts. As of December 2017, a number of those districts were in the process of installing or planning for the installation of solar systems in their schools.

Since its inception in 2007, KyotoUSA's HELIOS Project has provided the technical and financial analyses that has led to the installation of approximately 49 MW of solar on 177 California schools.

Environmental Advocacy

KyotoUSA (via its fiscal sponsor, the Sequoia Foundation) was admitted as a [non-governmental observer to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#). KyotoUSA attended [COP 11](#) (Conference of the Parties) in December 2005 in Montreal/Canada and COP 21 in December 2015 in Paris/France. KyotoUSA hosted a delegation of eight to the Paris talks, including Tom Butt, former Mayor of [Richmond, California](#), Dawn Weisz, Chief Executive Officer of [MCE](#), and Shawn Marshall, then Executive Director of [LEAN Energy U.S](#) and now [CEO of Peninsula Clean Energy](#). The team made 3 presentations at the Paris COP using the theme of "[Community Choice Energy: Power to the People!](#)" ([video](#)). Governor Jerry Brown's then Senior Energy Advisor, and now a Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission, [Clifford Rechtschaffen](#), participated in the third presentation.

On 28 November 2017, the City of Berkeley issued a [proclamation in honor of Tom Kelly and KyotoUSA's work](#) stating "**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Jesse Arreguin**, Mayor of the City of Berkeley, and Sophie Hahn, District 5 Councilmember, do hereby express our profound gratitude to **TOM KELLY AND KYOTOUSA** for their tireless work addressing climate change in our City and beyond."

Community Choice Energy

In 2005, KyotoUSA joined other local advocates to press the City of Berkeley to become a participant in a northern Alameda County [Community Choice Aggregation](#) (CCA or CCE) program together with the cities of [Oakland](#) and [Emeryville](#). A study funded to determine the feasibility of a local CCA by Navigant Consulting (March 2006) eventually led the cities to conclude that CCA was not feasible at that time due to undetermined risks and economic viability.

In 2012, KyotoUSA joined the [Ecology Center's](#) effort to find new approaches to the reduction of the City's greenhouse gas emissions. The Ecology Center and the City of Berkeley established the [Berkeley Climate Action Coalition \(BCAC\)](#) to foster constituent-led programs that would support the [City's Climate Action Plan goals](#). KyotoUSA successfully lobbied the BCAC to include a Community Choice Energy Working Group that founder Tom Kelly co-chaired for 2 years with [Al Weinrub](#) from the [Local Clean Energy Alliance](#). The Working Group spent several months

identifying the environmental, economic, and social benefits - as well as the roadblocks - to the establishment of a CCE program, conducting outreach activities with key stakeholders, seeking funding opportunities, and holding regular meetings with the members of the BCAC Community Choice Energy Working Group. In December 2012, the CCE Working Group joined a number of East Bay organizations in proposing the creation of a Community Choice Energy program under the auspices of the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD). The proposal was ultimately rejected by the [EBMUD Board of Directors in December 2012](#) indicating that the County's cities, and not EBMUD, should take the lead on forming a Community Choice program.

In July 2013, Seth Baruch of [Carbonomics](#) approached KyotoUSA with an offer to develop an "Implementation Plan" for BCAC's work to achieve CCE in Alameda County. Seth committed to develop this concept paper pro-bono by adapting a CCE Implementation Plan from documents he had drafted and compiled while applying for the Executive Director position at [Sonoma Clean Power](#). The study for Alameda County was finalized in February 2014. Entitled "[From Concept to Implementation](#)" it covered the potential benefits and risks of creating an East Bay Community Choice energy program in terms of local renewables development, new community investments, job creation, greenhouse gas reductions, financing, and lower energy bills. It explored what such a program does and described the process of creating it. In addition, the study outlined the estimated costs and potential revenues of an East Bay program. The study also addressed the potential risks of establishing a Community Choice program and how those risks could be mitigated.

From October 2013 to September 2014, KyotoUSA arranged in-person meetings to discuss the creation of a CCE program in Alameda County and Contra Costa County with the five Alameda County Supervisors as well as with Supervisors from Contra Costa County, the Director of the Alameda Community Development Agency, executives from StopWaste, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association (ACCMA), and other stakeholders.

On June 3, 2014 the Alameda Co. Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to pass a "[Resolution of Intent](#)" to Study the Feasibility of Community Choice Aggregation for Alameda County".

On October 4, 2016 the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to form East Bay Community Energy ([EBCE](#)), now named [Ava Community Energy](#), to be overseen by a Joint Powers Authority (JPA). To date, 13 of the 14 incorporated cities and the County and three cities in San Joaquin County have joined the JPA (the City of Alameda has its own public utility and is ineligible to join). [Member jurisdictions](#) include Albany, Berkeley, Dublin, Emeryville, Fremont, Hayward, Lathrop, Livermore, Oakland, Piedmont, San Leandro, Stockton, Tracy, Union City, Pleasanton and Newark.

The East Bay Community Energy program began delivering electricity to commercial customers in 2018 and all other customer classes in 2019.

In 2018, KyotoUSA received funding from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to conduct a study to determine the implications of a city enrolling all its electric accounts (residential, non-residential, and municipal) at 100% renewable electricity rather than the more carbon intensive default product offered by CCA programs. The study, [100% Renewable Energy Study for Seven Cities in the East Bay Community Energy Program](#), looked at the default and optional products from existing CCAs, cost to customers for a 100% renewable product, marginal costs for the additional renewable power, effect on opt out rates, impact on other rate payers, and customer willingness to pay more for a 100% renewable product. The study concluded that a switch to a 100% renewable default would have significant environmental and economic benefits without a profound impact on rates or customer opt outs. KyotoUSA worked with [Fosterra Clean Energy Consulting](#) on the study that was completed in 2018.