

# GREEN MATTERS

*A publication of the "Green Mission Team" at Calvary Presbyterian Church*

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## **GREEN MATTERS INTERVIEW WITH STEVE McDOUGAL**

*Steve McDougal is VP, Marketing and Business Development, for 3Degrees, which enables businesses and individuals to fund clean energy and carbon reduction projects. Steve is also a co-founder of the company. Steve and Jan have two sons, Kevin and Eric.*

### **Q: WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN?**

My wife, Jan, and I were active at 4<sup>th</sup> Presbyterian Church in Chicago before moving to Mill Valley in 1999 after a lifetime in Chicago. We had a strong family and friend base here, plus we finally got sick of the freezing rain storms in October and May! We visited several different churches in Marin before coming to Calvary. The church just felt more like the active, vibrant urban 4<sup>th</sup> Presbyterian that we loved in Chicago. We also were really impressed with Laird's sermons, the strong community and terrific Sunday School program. Our search was over. **Q:**

**AND HOW DID YOU MAKE YOUR WAY TO 3DEGREES?** While working at CNET, I realized that I had little passion for what I was doing. I saw a press release from 3 Phases Energy, which was the previous company, before I helped lead a management buy-out from the founders. I invited the contact out for a drink to tap his brain and learned that he wanted to hire a Sales

manager to conduct outreach to encourage corporations to voluntarily support renewable energy production through the purchase of credits, known as RECS. I went home that night realizing that I could do the type of work I like (sales) selling something I really cared about. At age 38, I FINALLY realized what I wanted to do in life.

### **Q: WHERE DID THE NAME "3DEGREES" COME FROM?**

Some scientists believe that by the year 2100, the earth's temperature may rise as much as 3 degrees. Nicholas Stern, head of the British government's economic service and former chief economist of the World Bank, issued a paper known as "The Stern Report," predicting that a 2-3-degree increase in average temperatures could leave 1/6 of the world's population facing flood or droughts and put several hundred million people at risk of starvation due to crop failure. Preventing a rise in temperature even a few degrees is important.

**Q: HOW DOES IT WORK – WHAT DO YOU DO?** I spend most of my time educating companies about how they can easily support green energy sources rather than just go along with the status quo. A commodity called Renewable Energy Certificates was created about 9 years ago that makes it easy for them. RECS are issued by clean energy sources, like wind power, and are purchased like claim checks separate from the electricity itself. The sale of these "claim checks" provides a second stream of revenue, like a voluntary subsidy, that helps

cover the slightly higher cost of production that wind has. This became a very popular way for companies to support clean energy in the amount that they use without having to incur the cost of trying to hook up a wind turbine, or even trying to install solar, which can be extremely costly or impractical for many locations for various reasons. For example, one of my first big wins was getting Starbucks to purchase credits equal to 20% of the power they use in all their stores. The credits are needed because no one can control where wind power goes -- it all gets delivered to the grid and becomes just plain electricity, so no one can say they actually use it, but by purchasing RECS from wind farms around the country, they can signal their demand for clean energy vs. whatever is normally put into the grid by the utilities. An independent non-profit program called Green-e audits the sellers within the system.

**Q: WHAT COMPANIES BUY THE CERTIFICATES?** All types, large and small. We have Starbucks, Johnson and Johnson, and as a good local example, Safeway offsets 100% of their electricity for all SF stores (tell them you appreciate this!). But we also love our small customers, like Waldecks books in downtown SF, which was my 2<sup>nd</sup> customer back in 2003. We also have a few hundred homes that have signed up. Contrary to some characterizations of the carbon and REC market, most companies do a great job of first trying to reduce what they use before looking at offsets. Plus, they purchase these

credits voluntarily -- they aren't looking for any free pass or trying to alleviate any guilt. These are credible efforts that I think deserve some praise. Now, a consumer who buys credits and sticks a bumper sticker touting their greenness on their car that gets horrible gas mileage . . . that's another story.

**Q: DO YOU OFFER CERTIFICATES FOR PROJECTS OTHER THAN WIND POWER?** The credits, again known as RECS, are generated from all kinds of renewable energy sources like solar, biomass, and landfill gas. We also make commitments to buy carbon reduction credits from projects that capture greenhouse gases -- such as methane that gets collected at large scale dairy farms (think large pools of manure). Methane is about 21 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, and there are probably 100,000 dairy farms in the US. At each one, the manure gets shoveled into a "pond" that could be as big as a football field and 12 feet deep and releases methane. Currently there is no requirement to prevent this practice, but it is possible to capture and destroy it using "digesters," large tanks that hold the manure for 3 weeks as bacteria break down the manure and separate the methane, which can get burned (cleanly) or converted to gas for electricity generation. These projects generate Verified Emission Reductions, known

as carbon offsets, which sometimes are misunderstood. The reality is that the credits make many of these projects happen.

**Q: WE SEE MANY OFFERS PITCHED TO THE AVERAGE CITIZEN TO BUY CARBON OFFSETS. HOW DO WE KNOW IF THESE OFFSETS WORK?**

There are probably 350 organizations around the world that now offer carbon offsets, maybe 375 by the time this goes to print. In the US, a small number of these organizations have a track record. If you are interested in offsetting some aspect of your personal or business' footprint, you'll want to ask the provider how long they have been around, who are their customers, and what is projects get verified. Self created standards and self verification are not acceptable; there are good third-party standards and verifiers that help provide credibility and ensure that the reductions you are supporting are legitimate.

**Q: WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP, WHAT WAS YOUR FAMILY'S INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?** My Danish mother had a great respect for life. She hated to even kill a bug if she could move it. She got our family recycling in 1973 before anyone else was doing it – neighbors wondering why we were saving all these smelly dog food cans. It's great that recycling is so common, but it's unfortunate when people think that it's enough. Of course, we're not going to get where we need to go if

people recycle but then don't pay any attention to their automobile choices, their use of electricity at home, etc.

**Q: YOU HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN. ARE THEY LEARNING ENOUGH ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN SCHOOL?** The schools are teaching more biology and more about the natural world. That builds appreciation, which is an important first step.

**Q: ARE YOU PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES OF OUR BEING ABLE TO PREVENT A 3-DEGREE RISE IN TEMPERATURE?** At the current rate, we will not come anywhere close to making the necessary reductions and behavioral changes that are necessary to prevent serious changes from occurring. For example, some predictions have energy use as much as tripling by 2050, which is a grim reality given how much of this would likely be provided by fossil fuel sources. We need an exponential increase in energy efficiency technologies as well as wind, solar and other alternative energies, along with a huge decrease in fossil fuels.

Government and corporations should lead but we really need people to take more personal accountability and have it show up in their purchasing decisions, making good choices that also serve to reward corporations that do the right thing. What makes me optimistic is the growing awareness by corporations and their realization of the opportunities, both environmental and financial, that exist with increased operational efficiencies. Unlike a few years ago, the corporate

Environmental Manager actually is getting an audience with executive management these days. Again, the key comes back to consumers to voice their opinion and vote with their pocketbook -- that gives the Environmental Managers more power to push for change.

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### WASTE REDUCTION AT CALVARY, THANKS TO STAFF

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Larry Gardner and Liz Johnson have been working with Golden Gate Recycling to reduce Calvary's waste and save money by:

- ♣ Eliminating two 96-gallon black bins, for a monthly savings of about \$350!
- ♦ Putting the waste bins directly on the curb on garbage collection day, for a savings of over \$100 a month!
- ♥ Introducing 2 sets of blue and green cans in the kitchen for recyclable and compostable waste.
- ♠ Introducing 2 small green compost pails for the two smaller kitchens.

An enthusiastic representative from Golden Gate Recycling has conducted two training sessions for staff at Calvary and has spoken at one of the senior lunches, focusing on placing compostable material in the green bin.

When you are at Calvary, be sure to use BLUE for recycled matter and GREEN for compostable. BLACK is used only as a last resort.

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### HOME MONEY-SAVER

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You can save about 50% on your scavenger bill by requesting a smaller black bin. The 20-gallon bin from Sunset Scavenger is \$19.07 a month (the "smaller" bin is the same size, but has a liner to reduce capacity). What are you paying now? Do you use the blue and green bins so effectively that your black bin is just half full every collection day? Check your bill and call the service number for a smaller bin.

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### CAN SOLAR WORK IN SAN FRANCISCO?

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Is San Francisco too cloudy to go solar? The California Academy of Sciences does not think so. When visiting the roof of the new science building, you see its solar panels and a sign letting you know that there are 60,000 photovoltaic cells on the roof canopy, supplying 250,000 kWh (kilowatt hours) of clean energy annually (that's 5-10% of the California Academy of Sciences' energy needs) and preventing the release of more than 20.5 metric tons of greenhouse emissions annually.

*Published by the Green Mission Team, edited by Paula Jesson*

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