

Rural Business and Cooperative Service • Rural Energy for America Program

Renewable Energy Helps Rural Business Prosper, Benefits Community

Fort Klamath serves as a gateway to Crater Lake National Park in southern Oregon, and the summer season brings an influx of people to this otherwise quiet, rural town.

“During those months, we work seven days a week, often up by six in the morning, and we do not stop until eleven at night or later,” said Heidi McLean, co-owner of The Aspen Inn.

With the fluctuating, seasonal tourism, income has been volatile for this small, family-owned and -operated business. Heidi and her partner, Shannon Sirola, improved the motel’s finances by installing a rooftop solar energy system with assistance from a \$24,420 grant provided through USDA Rural Development’s Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). The grant reduced their installation costs by a quarter.

They learned about the program from the Wy’East Resource Conservation and Development Council, which is working to accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency and renewable energy development, with REAP assistance. The nonprofit Sustainable Northwest helped Heidi and Shannon develop an application.

The Aspen Inn is now generating 96 percent of its electricity from solar energy, saving up to \$700 a month on its utility bills during the peak summer season.

Having achieved stable, minimal energy costs for their business through solar power, Heidi and Shannon can now budget and prepare for the future. “We’d like to invest our savings back into our business and make our hotel more energy efficient,” said Heidi.

The additional improvements they can now accomplish using their utility savings will help their business to prosper and continue attracting tourists, which will bring revenue into their community, benefitting the entire town.



Photo by Sustainable Northwest.

Co-owners Heidi and Shannon improved The Aspen Inn’s finances using renewable energy.

Obligation Amount:	\$24,420 grant (to The Aspen Inn); \$99,983 grant (to Wy’East RC&D)
Date of Obligation:	May 2017; March 2016
Congressional District:	Representative Walden, District 2; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Partners:	Energy Trust of Oregon (\$18,000 incentive); Federal Tax Credit (\$16,472); Wy’East RC&D, Sustainable Northwest, and Klamath Watershed Partnership (technical assistance)
Impact:	A small, rural business used renewable energy to reduce its utility bill and improve its finances, helping it continue to attract tourists, which will benefit the entire community of Fort Klamath.

This story was originally developed, and the photos taken by Sustainable Northwest.

Story updated December 2017 • USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, lender.