

Rural Development • Rural Business & Cooperative Service • Rural Energy for America Program

Electric Cooperative Helps Rural Consumers Go Green

The Umatilla Electric Cooperative, incorporated in 1937 through the Rural Electrification Act, has been providing electric power to rural areas of northeastern Oregon for eight decades. A significant portion of the energy sold by the cooperative is derived from renewable sources, primarily hydropower. In recent years, the cooperative has experienced a robust increase in demand, in large part due to industrial customers seeking to purchase additional renewable energy to meet public expectations and regulatory requirements.

To keep pace with the quickly expanding interest in renewable energy, this local, consumer-owned electric cooperative constructed a 1.3-megawatt solar photovoltaic system with assistance from a USDA Rural Development grant of \$250,134 provided through the Rural Energy for America Program. Constructed on six acres, this \$2.8 million renewable energy project consists of nearly 4,000 interconnected solar panels. The system should produce 1.7 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year, which is enough to power approximately 110 homes.



The Umatilla Electric Cooperative has constructed a solar energy generating plant on the eastern edge of Umatilla, Oregon.

The expansion of the cooperative's renewable energy sources will not only help it to comply with Oregon's renewable portfolio standard, which requires large utilities to provide 25 percent of their retail sales of electricity from clean, renewable sources by 2038; it will also help the cooperative to meet local demand and increase options for its consumers to go green. Meanwhile, the grant funding from USDA reduces the electric cooperative's up-front investment in the project, and any revenues generated in excess of the organization's operating expenses will be credited to consumer-owners' accounts, reinvesting back into the local community and helping to grow the economy.

Obligation Amount:	\$250,134 grant
Date of Obligation:	May 27, 2016
Congressional District:	Representative Walden, District 2; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Demographics:	A large portion of the Columbia Basin and Blue Mountain areas of northeastern Oregon, including most of Umatilla County
Impact:	Businesses and residents in northeast Oregon will have an expanded ability to purchase renewable energy with the construction of a new solar energy plant by the local electric cooperative; the system will provide 1.7 million kilowatt hours of renewable energy per year.
