

# Solar toilets?

State parks  
make way for  
space age comfort

Solar toilets? Don't laugh, but they are going to be built in two Oregon state parks.

The "flushers" will not be controlled by solar power, but the hot water in the sinks will be solar heated. If the two projects are successful, solar outhouses may be cropping up all over Oregon in state parks and recreation areas.

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Of the Emerald

The current project involves equipping bath house buildings at the Umpqua Light House on the Oregon coast (near Reedsport) and Tumalo State Park near Bend with solar-heated water systems. The experimental installations will demonstrate the value and practicality of solar energy in two distinctly separate geographical and climatic conditions.



An existing building at the Umpqua Light House site has a nearly ideal roof from the standpoint of slope and orientation toward the sun in the south. The entire south roof face will be covered by 12 to 15 solar panels (about 350 square feet). A 500-gallon preheat water tank in line with the existing propane heating equipment will be installed.

The Umpqua solar retrofitting will save about 1,200 gallons of propane during the busy (and sunny) tourist season. At current prices of 40 cents per gallon, it will mean about \$480 in savings while conserving non-renewable resources.

In contrast, the Tumalo site in Eastern Oregon has existing facilities which are not oriented to the south as required for solar panels. Structural modifications will result in the construction of two detached towers to support a total of 700 square feet of panels. A 3,000-gallon storage tank will either be buried or built into the towers.

The solar outhouses will also have monitoring equipment installed to evaluate the success and maintenance performance of the equipment. The monitoring will be done by the Oregon Department of Energy (ODE), which is the project coordinator.

"We know the technology and economics of solar energy indicate the project should be successful," says DOE engineer Carl Rempel. "However, what we want to consider are all the variables, such as vandalism and maintenance, that can only be considered after a trial period under actual field conditions."

Rempel indicated that a \$30,000 grant from Pacific Northwest Regional Commission should be available by Oct. 15. Oregon's Legislative Emergency Board has approved the proposal, as has Gov. Bob Straub.

State parks personnel will probably install the equipment prior to the beginning of the tourist season in April. If the demonstration project which Rempel calls the "exact marriage of sun resources and tourists peak loads" survives the continual flushing and washing by tourists, about 150 buildings of a similar nature around the state could be retrofitted for solar water-heat systems.

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