

SOLAR

Continued from Page A1

that output is then applied to their bill to subtract off, essentially, their usage.”

Subscriptions, which are on a first-come, first-served basis, will cost \$250 per share and are available to anyone living or doing business in the OTEC service territory, which includes Baker, Union, Grant and Harney counties.

“We broke it up into what we think are affordable, small portions because that’s one of the things we’ve heard from members is roof-top solar has an extremely high upfront cost,” Tracy said. “What the community solar project brings to people is the ability to buy into it at smaller increments — \$250 per portion.”

The 500 panels will generate approximately 200 kilowatts of electricity that will be distributed along OTEC’s system.



This field along U.S. Highway 30 outside La Grande will be home to Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative’s 500-panel community solar project. The project is slated to be operational by fall 2022.

Joseph Hathaway/
Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative

“We’re hoping that if shares sell quickly that we can expand it,” Tracy said. “Ultimately, we’d like to have one in each of our service territories.”

The subscription will be good for 20 years and can be moved around within the cooperative’s service territory or can be gifted to someone.

“Let’s say you move out of territory, you can gift it to your friend, neighbor or kids,” Joseph Hathaway, the cooperative’s communications manager, said. “That share will still continue up until 20 years.”

Tracy said members will see no increase in their monthly bill to pay for the cost of the solar farm, the costs are covered by the members who purchase subscriptions.

More than 94% of the power Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative receives from Bonneville Power Administration is carbon-free, with about 85% of it being from hydroelectric.

“We’ve got a phenomenal, enviable power supply, as good or better than anywhere in the world in terms of its low environmental impact and climate

change carbon impact,” Tracy said. “So we feel really good about that and really positive about it. But beyond that, we’re working on this project to supply an even more local and even more renewable power supply that a lot of our members have asked for.”

Hathaway said the solar project came from some of the surveying the cooperative has done over the years.

“I think the last survey we saw, it was around 20% said that they would like to have that solar option,” he said.

BOOST

Continued from Page A1

that they are hoping to add Union as one of their stops once the economy is back in line,” Hefner said.

Rainier Amusements, of Portland, which has operated at the livestock show in recent years, is one of the companies Hefner contacted.

“Rainier Amusements is super to work with,” she said. “It wants to be on the regular schedule next year.”

Hefner understands how much people will miss the presence of a carnival.

“You always expect it to be there. It will be quiet and dark without the carnival,” Hefner said, explaining that many of the rides light up the night.

Mike Colkitt, the owner of the Union Market, said the loss of the carnival will also hurt his business during EOLS week because of the loss of carnival worker traffic.

Still, the Union business owner anticipates that he

will see an uptick in sales. One of the big reasons is that many entrants in FFA and 4-H competitions at the livestock show come to Union from outside Union County and spend the week in town.

“They will bring their whole families,” he said. “A lot of families will be coming in and will stay all week.”

20% uptick

Randy Freeman, who owns Rattle Tale Coffee & Such with his wife, Tanya, on Main Street in Union, also said his business is brisker during EOLS week.

“It is spotty but it is always up,” said Freeman, noting that his sales usually jump at least 20%.

He is not sure how many of his added customers have been carnival workers. Freeman said he will probably know after this year’s livestock show if the lack of a carnival impacts his business.

“The test will be this year,” he said.

Business at Hometown



The Observer, File

Carnival-goers reflect in the window of a concession stand as a worker with Rainier Amusements dunks an apple in caramel during the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show in Union on Saturday, June 12, 2021. High fuel prices are to blame for the 2022 event not having a carnival. Event organizers say it’s the first time in decades a carnival hasn’t been part of the livestock show.

Hardware on Main Street also benefits from the EOLS, according to Terri Stoltz, who owns the store with her husband, Lee. She said Hometown Hardware sales pick up in the month leading up to the EOLS as people come in to purchase supplies for work at the stockshow’s grounds. Hometown Hardware also benefits during EOLS week when more

people come in to buy the espresso coffee Hometown Hardware brews.

No vacancy

Charlie Morden, owner of the Union Hotel, also said his business improves due to EOLS, especially during the last three days when there are rodeo competitions and horse racing.

“We always have an

uptick,” he said.

Morden said his hotel is always filled to capacity during those three days and that he has capped the waiting list at 15 potential guests.

This year, the livestock show, which dates back to 1908, is not exclusively the reason the Union Hotel will be filled to capacity again. Morden noted that Eastern Oregon University’s graduation this year is on June 11, coinciding with EOLS week. This means that all hotel and motel rooms in the region will be filled to capacity next week, Morden said.

Bringing families together

Leonard Flint, the mayor of Union, said many families get together during the week of the livestock show. He said people like coming at a time when they can enjoy the company of their loved ones while also taking in the EOLS events.

Flint also sees the Eastern Oregon Livestock Show as an event that gives people a

chance to discover the amenities of Union, like Buffalo Peak Golf Course and the Union County Museum. The mayor said people introduced to the course and museum are more likely to come back after the livestock show.

Flint is impressed with how closely his city is linked to the event. He cites a city ordinance banning pigs in town as an example. He noted that the ordinance provides exceptions though for youths who are raising pigs for 4-H or FFA competitions at EOLS or the Union County Fair.

Many of the 4-H and FFA participants coming to the livestock show bring animals they have raised that are sold at the annual EOLS auction. Each year the event raises many thousands of dollars for the youths who raised the livestock.

“It is a huge show of support for kids,” said Dave Billings, Eastern Oregon Livestock Show president, of the auction. “It makes kids realize that what they are doing is worthwhile.”

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