

Solar array makes Hermiston RV park first of its kind

By KATY NESBITT
FOR THE HERMISTON HERALD

The new Panelview RV Park near Hermiston is the first of its kind to provide solar shade canopy solar arrays, meaning on a sunny day more energy could be produced than a motor-home can use.

The 147-kilowatt solar array system will generate an estimated 226,357 kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity per year, which is enough to power 27 typical U.S. homes. Overall, the solar array will help the RV park reduce its utility bill by \$19,020 per year.

"We named the park Panelview RV Park due to the fact that our guests are surrounded by solar panels and the park runs entirely on renewable energy," said Kent Madison, Panelview RV Park owner.

Overseeing construction is Sunthurst Energy. Owner Daniel Hale said his company is an Energy Trust Trade ally and he became familiar with the USDA grant opportunity when he built arrays for Wtechlink and the Rees Ranch.

"From the beginning it was deemed essential to add solar panels to this project," Hale said. "Per our research, at time of



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

The Panelview RV Park, just outside of Hermiston, will have 49 sites when it is completed and generate an estimated 226,357 kilowatt-hours of renewable electricity each year.

filing for the grant, Panelview RV Park will be the first with solar shade canopies with nearly 100% net energy metering."

Net energy metering is a solar incentive that allows the owner to store energy in the electric grid. When solar panels produce more electricity than needed, that energy is sent to the grid in exchange for credits.

The USDA Rural Energy for America Pro-

gram grant funded \$49,428 of the \$197,713 total cost and Energy Trust of Oregon will contribute \$25,000 in commercial solar rebates. The remaining balance will be paid for by the owner, Hale said.

Madison said Panelview will sell a little more than half of a megawatt of solar to Pacific Power.

"We wanted to control our future power costs and solar does that," Madison said.

Panelview RV Park will have 49 sites when com-

pleted and is the first in the nation to have a Phage sewer treatment plant that can control environmental wastewater process problems.

Hale said Sunthurst, established in 2013, has built solar projects of every type from ground mount to canopy and rooftop and energy storage. His company is licensed in five states and has completed more than 18 megawatts of solar energy systems. About 50 percent of their work is Oregon.

Outside of Umatilla County, many of their projects have been in Klamath Falls, Ashland and Medford.

Sunthurst has installed arrays at the Oregon Air National Guard, Pendleton Fire Station No. 1 and the Pendleton Oregon Department of Transportation District Office.

In all, \$8.7 million in

REAP funding was granted to Oregon to help 27 farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses adopt renewable energy technologies, conduct critical energy audits, and make pollution and cost-cutting energy efficiency improvements.

"Energy efficiency upgrades will help farmers and ranchers lower costs, cut pollution, and create jobs — a common-sense, win-win-win part of that path," said Sen. Jeff Merkley, who serves as the ranking member on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees funding for the USDA. "I'm pleased that these funds are headed to Oregon, and will keep working to ensure that people in every part of our state have the chance to build better, more prosperous, healthier lives."

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