

Holy Cross Members Benefit From New Solar Array

More solar power will be part of the electricity provided to Holy Cross Energy members when a new array of solar photovoltaic panels now under construction at the Garfield County Regional Airport near Rifle comes on line.

Holy Cross Energy members will be able to "buy" one or more solar panels and offset their electric usage with clean, renewable energy generated by the panels.

The 3,575 panels in the array will actually be owned by Garfield County Airport Solar Array, a subsidiary of the Clean Energy Collective of Carbondale that also owns the solar array at in the Roaring Ford Valley. CEC is sponsoring the project as a way to make renewable energy more available to the general public.

Homeowners and small business owners may want to support renewable energy, but they may not have the right location on their property to install photovoltaic panels. Or they may not have the \$10,000 to \$15,000 that an individual photovoltaic system can cost. CEC give them another option.

For about \$750 per solar panel (depending on which rebates apply), an individual may "buy" a panel. Then the electricity generated by that panel will be introduced to the Holy Cross Energy power grid. Holy Cross will monitor what is generated and apply that solar power production against that solar panel owner's electric demand. The panel owner will see a reduction in his Holy Cross electric bill.

Completely powering a typical home in the area with solar energy would take about two dozen solar panels, according to a quote from CEC partner Paul Spencer in the Glenwood Springs Post.

Purchasing one or two panels will not totally eliminate an electric bill, but it will reduce that bill. Spencer estimated that the pay back from a panel would be about 13 years for the average Holy Cross member. Since the system has a 50-year warranty, it will provide power from the panels for an additional 37 years after the "owners" have gotten their money back through lower electric bills.

The panels in this first phase of the project will have a capacity of 858 kilowatts, which will produce over 1,500 megawatt-hours of electricity annually. The size of the second phase will be determined once the first phase has sold out.