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El Jebel residents growing a solar garden



Colorado has surged to the forefront of solar power. Clean energy engineers are building the future of how we can power our homes, across the Western Slope. The first revolutionary solar garden is growing in Eagle County.

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Growing a solar farm

EL JEBEL, Colo. (KKCO) - Colorado has surged to the forefront of solar power. Clean energy engineers are building the future of how we can power our homes, across the Western Slope. The first revolutionary solar garden is growing in Eagle County.

"Many have tried to figure out how to do community-based energy in past. It's taken us over a year to crack that code," says Clean Energy Collective Founder Paul Spencer.

The solution to easily accessible solar power is radiating in El Jebel. Four hundred linked solar panels will be absorbing sunlight and feeding it to the local grid.

"We deliberately set this up from the beginning as a vehicle to create quantum leap of adoption of clean energy," says Spencer.

People can buy a panel, in essence providing their own energy to the electric company. This saves on money and pollution from power plants. "This array (in El Jebel) is sold out. We're already selling into Garfield Airport site," says Spencer.

Clean Energy Collective plans on building sites across the Western Slope, including near Grand Junction. The revolutionary concept of an energy-share is sparking interest, especially for those who don't want to cover their roof with solar panels.

"All the excuses of 'they're expensive' and 'hard to maintain' and 'what if we need a new roof' and 'we don't know the first thing about owning solar panels'," didn't keep Gina Shaw away, she plans to buy into the solar farm.

Even those living in apartments or in shaded homes can access direct rays from the selectively placed solar farms. "The site we're working on in Eagle County is actually the capping of a landfill. Great site...no one sees it," says Spencer.

What will be seen are solar gardens growing both green energy and jobs. "We are a very resource-rich part of the state. These are jobs to our rural areas of the state. These are investments in our rural areas," says State Senator Gail Schwartz.

But for areas that don't see the sun, Clean Energy Collective will generate other ways of sharing natural power. "If you were in Maine, we would be looking at wind. People would be able to fractionally own part of a windmill," says Spencer.

One solar panel costs about \$600. Clean Energy Collective says the savings are best seen over time.

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