

CEC Offers Member-owned Power Generation At The Community Level

by Staff Writers

Carbondale CO (SPX) May 20, 2010

A [Carbondale](#), Colo., company is revolutionizing the way consumers and utilities embrace and utilize renewable energy. In a program that's the first of its kind in the nation, on May 17 the Clean Energy Collective received approval from the Garfield Board of County Commissioners for a long-term lease on 3.4 acres of airport land to create the largest privately owned [solar panel](#) array in the state.



illustration only

The land will be used to house up to 4,000 solar panels producing 900 kW of clean, [renewable energy](#), owned by and serving as many as 400 CEC members.

Opening the gates to providing renewable energy to the Western Slope and beyond, the approval paves the way for CEC to break ground in the very near future, with the panels installed by mid-summer and producing energy for members by September.

"At almost a megawatt site," says CEC founder Paul Spencer, "it substantiates for us and everyone else involved that this is the future. It sets the stage that the concept can be done on a very large scale."

The CEC concept is simple. The model allows local utility customers to collectively buy into a community-based renewable energy facility and reap the benefits without having to build a system of their own. It also offers members the same tax credits and rebates as those who put solar panels on their homes.

Members leverage their collective purchasing power to buy as much clean energy as they choose at reduced prices, and are directly credited on their electric bills. In short,

thanks to proprietary software and careful attention to legal, tax, monitoring and billing issues, it gives anyone who buys electricity in [Colorado's](#)

Roaring Fork and Vail valleys the option to shift to clean, affordable energy.

In prior weeks the CEC received conceptual approval from [Eagle](#) County to move forward with a similar array on a seven-acre site near Wolcott, and an initial nod to pursue a 500 kW site on two acres in Snowmass Village. It closed on a long-term lease for its first member-owned solar array in El Jebel just a few weeks earlier.

"This again is momentous," says Spencer, adding that it's expected to double the region's solar adoption in the next three years. "It represents the future of clean energy. Our model makes solar available to absolutely everyone, including renters, those with reduced incomes and homeowners in solar-challenged locations."

The model is also a win-win for the local utility. "One of its benefits is a utility-scale community system fully integrated with the utility that's perpetually operated and maintained," says Steve Casey of Holy Cross Energy, which provides power to most Roaring Fork Valley consumers.

"The CEC model provides a unique vehicle for our members to participate and enjoy the benefits of renewable energy generation."