

TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

NEWS

Regional solar project in the works

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1-megawatt

community-owned solar facility in the pipeline

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The San Miguel Power Association hopes to build a community solar project within its service territory and has selected Carbondale's Clean Energy Collective to help push the project along.

In March SMPA asked for bids for the design and construction of a renewable energy project within its boundary. SMPA's Board of Directors selected the Clean Energy Collective at its Aug. 22 meeting, and the two are now working to develop a one-megawatt community-owned solar facility.

"The Clean Energy Collective brought everything to the table that SMPA was looking for. They have experience working with other electric cooperatives and specialize in community solar projects," said SMPA General Manager Kevin Ritter in a press release.

Community solar projects, or solar gardens, open up solar power to a wide array of people compared the private solar installations that are more common. Say you don't have a roof of your own to put a panel or two on? No problem. Renters and those who live in the region's dark corners and side canyons can latch on to the larger project and still tap the sun's rays for energy. It's cheaper and has no maintenance costs.

"We are very excited to be chosen as SMPA's partner for community solar and look forward to offering all SMPA customers the opportunity to benefit from community solar ownership," said Clean Energy Collective's President and Founder Paul Spencer in a release.

The project would give all SMPA members the option to invest in solar generation. One could buy into the solar garden — meaning they would purchase one or more of the panels and snag a monthly monetary credit for the energy generated. Specific pricing and more details of the plan aren't yet available, but The Clean Energy Collective will be evaluating potential sites for the project and working with SMPA staff members to finalize contract details.

The Clean Energy Collective hopes to use as many local businesses and solar installers as possible during project construction, according to SMPA.

"It was also important to us that the Clean Energy Collective demonstrate a commitment to our local community and our local businesses. Solar projects like the one we're looking at will require sub-contractors for groundwork, solar panel sales and panel installation. And, we hope to involve as many local businesses as possible," Ritter said.

— For more, check out: www.easycleanenergy.com, and www.smpa.com.

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