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Port of Columbia's Artisan Food Center solar project gets key funding

More than \$80,000 from Pacific Power's Blue Sky Washington renewable energy customers enables project that will provide much of the center's power needs.

DAYTON, Wash.—Before summer, the Blue Mountain Station Artisan Food Center will be getting much of the electricity it needs to operate from solar panels atop the building, which is already a leader in energy efficiency.

“This project will help the Port and the Artisan Food Center,” said Jennie Dickinson, manager of the Port of Columbia, which owns the center and leases space to local artisan food processors. “The funding award from Pacific Power’s Blue Sky customers is what is making this happen so quickly. And the project will be the final piece that will allow us to apply for Silver LEED certification status, making it the first food processing center in the state to earn that designation.”

Construction is slated to begin late-March on the array atop the 6,912 square foot building which opened in December 2013. The panels will have a capacity of 35.8 kilowatts and will allow the Port to save operating costs.

The Port is partnering with Walla Walla FREE (Flat Roof Educational Energy) to install 6 complete systems on the roof of the structure. Walla Walla FREE works with private investors to construct solar projects on public buildings to provide a financial return to the investor, electricity for the building, and funding for scholarships to local students in the renewable energy field of study.

“This is a great partnership. The project will save approximately \$2,800 in power bills over the year and allow the Port to focus more of our resources on maintaining as well bringing new jobs to our area,” said Dickinson.

“Our Blue Sky customers put their dollars to work in their communities,” said Bill Clemens, regional community manager of Pacific Power. “Not only will these facilities supply renewable energy, but they are helping increase the visibility and adoption of renewable technology. We are proud to be part of this important effort along with our Blue Sky customers.”

This is the ninth year that Blue Sky customers have been funding local renewable projects in communities served by Pacific Power. All together, these projects have brought more than 5.5 megawatts of renewable energy capacity online. Since 2006, Blue Sky customers have helped finance more than 75

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facilities that produce power and demonstrate the viability of renewable energy in their communities. Blue Sky customers have invested approximately \$7 million in projects during that time. Other notable projects in Southeast Washington funded by Blue Sky customers include three solar arrays and a wind project at Walla Walla Community College and one solar project at Whitman College. There are approximately 800 local residents participating in Blue Sky.

Background on Artisan Food Center

In 2005, the local food processing plant in Dayton closed taking with it 45 full-time permanent and 900 seasonal jobs. The community struggled with trying to replace this loss. In 2007, the Port of Columbia, with partners the City of Dayton, Columbia County, the Dayton Chamber of Commerce and the SouthEast Washington Economic Development Association, held a series of community forums to determine the economic direction for the County. Two priorities emerged from these discussions. First was the future development of energy as an economic driver. Consistent with the rich agricultural heritage of the community and its past as a food processing center, Value-Added Agriculture was identified as the second priority. Following this directive, the Port of Columbia worked with a local marketing company, and a niche market for natural, organic food and sustainable processing and industrial tourism was identified. The Port of Columbia purchased 28 acres of land and began work to develop a natural food and beverage based cluster. In December, 2013, the first building was completed. The Artisan Food Center opened as the anchor for the world's very first destination eco-food processing park dedicated to the recruitment and marketing of artisan food processors.

The Artisan Food Center is a 6,912 square foot building that houses 5 food processing spaces, a commercial kitchen, a small retail area, and a public restroom. Within three months of opening 4 out of the 5 business spaces were filled with these businesses: Little Dipper Dairy, Aardvark Granola, Rey's Roast, and the Experimental Fermentation Company dba Mace Mead Works. Mary's Candies is the most recent business to locate in the building, which is now at 100% occupancy. All food processing spaces meet USDA and local health department requirements. There is also a commercial kitchen that can be rented as well as retail space with the Blue Mountain Station Co-op Market operating on Tuesdays and Saturdays in support of these businesses, regional producers, and weekly retail vendors.

More information can be found at www.bluemountainstation.com .

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About Blue Sky

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has ranked Blue Sky fifth or better in the nation for the 11th consecutive year in the number of customers buying renewable power. The Blue Sky Block, Usage and Habitat products are Green-e Energy certified. About 55,000 Pacific Power customers currently participate in the Blue Sky program across Oregon, Washington and California. For more information, visit www.pacificpower.net/bluesky.

About Pacific Power

Pacific Power provides electric service to more than 730,000 customers in Oregon, Washington and California. The company works to meet growing energy demand while protecting and enhancing the environment. Pacific Power is part of PacifiCorp, one of the lowest-cost electricity producers in the United States, with almost 1.8 million customers in six western states Information about Pacific Power is available on the company's website, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube pages, which can be accessed via pacificpower.net.

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About Walla Walla FREE

WW-FREE is a Washington state non-profit organization that administrates community solar projects. Community solar projects are privately owned renewable energy systems placed on local government property that qualify for increased monetary production incentives from the state of Washington. WW-FREE charges no fees for their work. Their officers take no compensation and have volunteered their efforts. Their goals are:

1. To raise environmental efficiency in public buildings which lowers the cost for our local municipalities to operate (your tax bill);
2. To raise money for scholarship endowments dedicated to lowering the cost for local children to go to college;
3. To enrich our community by investing and keeping money locally that otherwise would flow out of our area; and finally
4. To foster job training in tomorrow's energy and building technologies for our children.

More info can be found at <http://ww-free.com/>

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