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NEWS

For Immediate Release
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Bend water reclamation plant captures energy savings from the sewer

Energy-efficiency projects are expected to save ratepayers an estimated $14,700 annually

BEND, Ore. — December 12, 2011 — After participating in a 13-month energy training for Northwest wastewater utilities, the City of Bend water reclamation facility is implementing several energy-efficiency projects that are trimming the plant's operating budget at a time when every public dollar counts.

As a result of the training, the water reclamation plant made several operational adjustments, such as running one mixing pump in the digestion basin at 50 percent speed — a move that is saving an estimated $5,300 per year in energy costs without compromising treatment quality. The city expects to save another $5,400 per year by turning off one of two filters in its class A treatment, which prepares treated water for irrigation reuse. "The training taught us that our class A treatment was designed with future capacity that was costing us money," said Scott Thompson, operations supervisor.

After learning that Central Electric Cooperative could arrange for a free energy analysis from Bonneville Power Administration's Energy Smart Industrial program, the city requested a review of the plant's lighting. Now, the plant is moving forward with lighting improvements that should save ratepayers $20,000 in incentives for installation costs and another $4,000 per year in energy costs.

Oregon Sustainable Energy Management Systems Training, which was attended by 12 wastewater utilities from Oregon, Idaho and Washington, included seven day-long workshops spaced at intervals that allowed time for plenty of "homework." The training was organized by Oregon Association for Clean Water Agencies, ACWA, which brought in experts from Energy Trust of Oregon, Zero Waste Alliance, Bonneville Power Administration and consulting firms to teach the utilities how to identify energy-efficiency opportunities. Funding was provided by Energy Trust, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the participating wastewater utilities.

As part of its homework, staff at the Bend plant formed an energy team, made energy an agenda item at staff meetings, identified and implemented savings projects, explored ways to generate electricity from renewable resources, tracked progress and reported back to decision makers and plant staff.

The city is also exploring the feasibility of generating low-head hydropower at the outfall to the plant's evaporation ponds — a project that Thompson says looks quite hopeful in terms of cost effectiveness.

“The training was a great tool for awareness on sustainability for all staff,” said Thompson. “One of the key lessons we learned was to engage with utility providers and government to take advantage of available services. At the end of day, trimming our energy use means lower fixed costs, which is better for our ratepayers. It’s our responsibility to minimize those costs.”

Kim Crossman, industrial and agricultural sector lead at Energy Trust, applauded the efforts of Bend as well as the foresight of ACWA. “Lighting and operations and maintenance improvements are often the most cost-effective first steps to take in reducing energy use. Combining these types of practical steps with new, cutting edge strategic energy management practices offers the potential for continuous energy improvement,” said Crossman. “ACWA did an excellent service to utilities and ratepayers across the region by recognizing the need for this training and pulling it all together.”

Janet Gillaspie, ACWA executive director, said the exchange of information between utilities was an important part of the learning process. “Each day-long session included at least one tour of a participating utility’s treatment plant,” she said. “We saw first-hand how utilities are putting energy savings into practice, including the hurdles they’ve overcome. It was inspiring for all of us that some plants have set a goal to become energy independent within five years — to generate onsite all the energy that they use in the treatment process. Energy independence is becoming an attainable goal for many wastewater treatment plants.”

Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping utility customers benefit from saving energy and tapping renewable resources. Our services, cash incentives and energy solutions have helped participating customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas save nearly $800 million on energy bills. Our work helps keep energy costs as low as possible, creates jobs and builds a sustainable energy future. Learn more at www.energytrust.org or call 1-866-368-7878.

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