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Zone 7 Goes Solar in Water Treatment
Power Purchase Plan Helps Environment, Reduces Energy Costs

The Livermore-Amador Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency has taken a big step in both helping the environment and reducing energy costs by entering into an agreement to buy solar power for operation of its Del Valle Water Treatment Plant.

Zone 7's Board of Directors has authorized the agreement with Renewable Technologies Inc. under which the firm will design, install, operate, maintain and own the approximately 300-kilowatt photovoltaic energy- generation system. The solar panels will be installed on a portion of the Del Valle Water Treatment Plant property and produce about half of the energy used in water-treatment operations there.

"This is a step in the right direction," said General Manager Jill Duerig, noting the agency is continuing to explore additional ways to optimize its energy use in water treatment, groundwater pumping and overall operations. "The idea of reducing dependence on PG&E power and reducing costs, while at the same time reducing our carbon footprint, is a great win on every level."

The estimated reduction in energy cost during the first year of operation is \$16,000, and will total \$80,000 for the 20-year term of the power purchase agreement. The savings could be substantially more if conventional power costs escalate more than the conservative projections.

The project provides environmental benefits as well. Zone 7 will substantially reduce its annual greenhouse gas emissions by generating clean electricity rather than relying on PG&E, which might otherwise be emitting greenhouse gases from power plants that burn fossil fuels.

In the first year, the solar project is estimated to eliminate more than 511,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emission. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, this is equivalent to removing 42 cars from operation, planting 53 acres of trees or powering 21 average homes.

Under the agreement, Zone 7 will buy all electricity produced by the system at an initial rate of 12.5 cents per kilowatt hour, increasing annually at 3.5 percent over the 20-year term. The arrangement allows for Renewable Technologies Inc. to take advantage of solar rebates and federal tax credits, and does not require any upfront capital costs on Zone 7's part.

The solar panels are expected to be in service by the end of 2008.

Last year, Zone 7 was granted Climate Action Leader status for its proactive steps in helping to address global climate change. The agency's greenhouse gas emissions inventory was certified by the California Climate Action Registry, a nonprofit public-private partnership that serves as a voluntary greenhouse gas registry to protect, encourage and promote early actions to reduce greenhouse emissions.

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Zone 7 Water Agency is one of the 10 active zones of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. The District was established by the State Legislature in October 1949 to solve problems of flooding, drainage, channel erosion and water supply and conservation in Alameda County. In 1957, by popular vote, Zone 7 became a special district governed by a seven-member board of directors. Along with flood protection, Zone 7 supplies water to all of eastern Alameda County and a population of more than 190,000. Treated water is sold wholesale to local retailers, including the cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, the Dublin San Ramon Services District, and the California Water Service Company. Zone 7 also distributes untreated water to local agriculture operations and golf courses.

