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What Motivates ECE Solar Subscribers?

Surprise—it's not a big payback.

It converts sunlight into electricity in such an amazing way that it's no wonder some East Central Electric (ECE) solar subscribers are hoping for a miracle on their electric bill. Most subscribers have different motivations.

Longtime co-op members Barbara and Charles Wilson recently signed up for ECE's Community Solar Project. The Hectorville couple said they view their solar investment as a "leap of faith," one they hope will support the renewable energy effort and their electric co-op.

"We believe solar is the future," said Barbara. "We know we won't make a lot of money doing it, but the bottom line is we want to support clean energy and help the co-op keep our rates as affordable as they can."

ECE's Community Solar Project should be operational by the end of the year. Once up and running it will provide an alternative source of power during periods of extremely high usage when wholesale prices tend to increase. While solar subscribers receive 3.4 cents/kwh credit for the solar power produced, the co-op expects this credit to increase over time as wholesale power costs increase.

Because variables such as weather can affect solar production capacity, the co-op is cautious about promising solar subscribers big returns on their investment. It is simply too soon to tell.

What they do know is wholesale electricity prices are likely to increase. Based in Anadarko, Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) generates and transmits electricity to electric co-ops in three states. WFEC is partnering with 11 Oklahoma co-ops including ECE, to install small solar arrays to diversify their mix of generating fuels. WFEC is also involved in two utility-scale solar projects capable of producing 25 and 18 megawatts, respectively.

The added solar capacity brings flexibility to WFEC's generation portfolio by providing an alternative to the volatile price swings of coal and natural gas.

ECE solar subscribers like the Wilson's see the wisdom in that reasoning and support it. "It's an investment in our rural electric co-op more than an investment that gets us a big return," said Barbara.

Solar power is also clean and renewable, and they like that, too, she added.

While the support of renewable fuels is often associated with young adults, ECE solar subscribers don't fit that demographic. Most are over 55; many are retired or near retirement. Call it quirky or even refreshing, it does prove this old adage: With age comes wisdom, after all.

For more details on ECE Community Solar, please visit **www.ecoec.com**, or call **918-756-0833**.

operation roundup
update

Operation Roundup funds support local charitable organizations, civic groups, youth programs, community services, and needy families and individuals. For more information on this voluntary bill roundup program, please visit **www.ecoec.com.**

Figures to date:

Applications reviewed	848
Applications granted	592
Applications denied	244
Applications tabled	16
Scholarships awarded	$169,000
Total Disbursements	**$1,413,449.85**
Average member contribution	44¢

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