



COLORADO
Energy Office



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Office of Gov. John Hickenlooper

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San Miguel Power Association, GRID Alternatives and the Colorado Energy Office Partner on Low-Income Community Solar Project

Brownfield to greenfield project converts San Miguel County landfill into renewable energy site

DENVER – Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2016 – San Miguel Power Association (SMPA), GRID Alternatives (GRID) and the Colorado Energy Office (CEO) today announced the development of a community solar array that will lower the electric bills of qualified low-income residents in SMPA's service territory. The project is not only part of a statewide initiative to reduce energy costs for utilities' highest need customers, it is also an effort to turn a limited-use site into a clean energy generator.

With an unwavering vision to reclaim a local landfill, San Miguel County worked with its partners in project development to turn a "brownfield" into a "greenfield" and harness renewable energy that will help the local community for decades to come. Project supporters also include Energy Outreach Colorado, the Telluride Foundation and EcoAction Partners.

According to SMPA Chief Executive Officer Brad Zavorski, the rural electric cooperative has been looking to increase its local renewable energy generation portfolio in a way that makes the resource available to a larger portion of its members and keeps utility bills affordable. Turning an old landfill into a site of local clean renewable energy generation adds an additional layer of benefit to the community and the environment.

"SMPA has long been a leader in energy efficiency and renewable energy," said SMPA Board President Rube Felicelli. "We are now making home efficiency upgrades and local renewable energy readily available to our lower income members through SMPA's 'IQ' or 'income-qualified' [Weatherization and Solar Programs](#). We are excited to join with our partners to reduce our carbon footprint while also reducing the financial burden of high electrical bills on local families in need."

"When we see projects like this, we are filled with optimism," said Sandy Stavnes, Acting Assistant Regional Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "With this project, community partners came together to turn property that had limited reuse potential into something that will provide energy to community members in need as well as significant environmental benefits. A bonus is the solar panels on top of the landfill will assure the landfill cover is maintained."

This is the sixth low-income community solar demonstration project developed in partnership with local utilities through a \$1.2 million grant GRID Alternatives received from CEO in August 2015. Each project is piloting a slight variation on the low-income community solar model to address the unique needs of

rural utility service areas and their customers. The projects selected are both affordable and scalable for utility partners and offer great potential to expand across the state.

“This project, with its multiple bottom lines—energy cost saving for families, renewable energy, brownfield reclamation, and local solar job training—is a win for the whole community and a model for the state and the nation,” said Chuck Watkins, Executive Director of GRID Alternatives Colorado.

“This demonstration project with GRID and SMPA reinforces our low cost approach to community solar, which blends the delivery of clean-generated electricity and assisting our neighbors in need,” said Colorado Energy Office Director Jeff Ackermann.

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About Colorado Energy Office

The Colorado Energy Office works to improve the effective use of all of Colorado's energy resources and the efficient consumption of energy in all economic sectors by providing technical guidance, financial support, policy advocacy and public communications. Go to colorado.gov/energy to learn more.

About GRID Alternatives

GRID Alternatives Colorado is an affiliate of GRID Alternatives, the nation's largest nonprofit solar installer, bringing clean energy technology and job training to low-income families and underserved communities through a network of community partners, volunteers, and philanthropic supporters. For more information, visit gridalternatives.org/colorado.

About San Miguel Power Association

San Miguel Power Association (SMPA) is a member-owned, locally-controlled rural electric cooperative with offices in Nucla and Ridgway, Colorado. It is the mission of SMPA to demonstrate corporate responsibility and community service while providing its members safe, reliable, cost effective and environmentally responsible electrical service. SMPA serves approximately 9,600 members and 13,300 meters and supports local communities with \$300,000 annually in property taxes and \$400,000 in energy efficiency and renewable energy rebates. See smpa.com and [IQ Weatherization and Solar Programs](#) for more details.