Hidden Valley Lake Community Services District Breaks Ground on Carbon Free Power Project

Written by Winzler & Kelly

The Hidden Valley Lake Community Services District breaks ground on a solar power project for its wastewater treatment plant. This project will effectively take the wastewater treatment plant off the grid and convert to 100 percent solar power. The net benefit is two fold: the stabilization of energy costs at the water reclamation plant for the next three decades; and the significant reduction of the district’s carbon footprint. In the face of the rising cost of fossil fuels that is a significant benefit to the ratepayers of the district.

The project was funded on October 18, 2011, by USDA grants of nearly $1 million and $640,000 in low interest loans. The USDA’s support of the district’s project reflects the agency’s ongoing commitment to supporting the development of sustainable utility service for rural communities. The district will be able to fund its loan payments from the savings in power purchase costs. Winzler & Kelly, a subsidiary of GHD serves as the District Engineer and developed the project, which includes fixed photovoltaic arrays located at the water reclamation plant. Real Goods is the contractor who will supply and install arrays utilizing labor and subcontractors from south Lake County.

“This project realizes a long-term goal of our District,” says District General Manager Mel Aust. “With USDA’s support we’ll achieve energy independence and be able to protect our rate payers from long-term volatility in the power market. The solar project will reduce our carbon emissions by 112 tons per year. We already reuse all of our treated wastewater and this project enhances the sustainability of our operation. Our staff, our District Engineer and USDA worked hard to put this project together. Special thanks go to the Hidden Valley Lake CSD Board of Directors whose strong leadership has been instrumental and demonstrates that small communities can do bold and innovative things” and Congressman Mike Thompson for his advice and complete support of the solar project.