

Cityscape: May 10, 2018

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Healdsburg is one of the few cities in California that owns and operate its own electric company. As a result, Healdsburg residents and business owners pay 30 percent to 36 percent less than those in Santa Rosa, Windsor, and other cities. In total, these lower electric rates save our community more than \$5 million dollars every year -- dollars that stay in our community.

How did this come about? Over a century ago, the City's governing body determined that it was in the best interest of its citizens to build and operate an electric utility. While the early start of the electric utility simply provided street lighting, the City's Electric Department has grown to provide all the City's energy needs as well as public benefit programs that provide low-income discounts, a robust energy-efficiency program, and discounts for electric vehicle charging -- again, all at costs much lower than PG&E.

Creation of the Northern California Power Agency

This electric-utility expansion was the result of the City's partnership with several other northern California communities to form the Northern California Power Agency (NCPA). Since 1968, the NCPA has helped California communities meet their power needs in an environmentally responsible manner and at a low cost.

With its 16 member-districts and cities, the NCPA continues to be a strong not-for-profit joint powers agency for nearly 700,000 electric consumers. For Healdsburg, the NCPA helps ensure that a large portion of the City's energy needs are met by clean and sustainable renewable and hydro-electric generation. In an average year, more than 60 percent of the City's energy comes from geothermal and hydro generation -- that's double the statewide average.

Going Greener

To further the City's environmental goals, City staff are working closely with the NCPA to build new clean-energy resources. Two great examples: A solar energy contract with sPower and the development of a floating-solar project for the City's recycled-water ponds.

Through the NCPA, the City participated in a solar power-purchase agreement to receive energy from a 50-megawatt utility-scale solar array in Antelope Valley, in the high desert of northern Los Angeles County. This solar array in Antelope Valley generates enough clean, renewable energy to power 15,000 homes each year. Our piece of this project, which will go into effect in 2020, will provide roughly 600 homes in Healdsburg with clean energy, increasing the City's clean-energy sources by 7 percent.

In addition, the City is partnering with the NCPA to install floating solar arrays on the City's recycled-water ponds. The main purpose of the solar arrays is to protect the ponds -- which can hold as much as 25 million gallons of water -- from algae growth. The arrays will also generate close to 2 megawatts of solar power to operate the Water Reclamation Facility and provide carbon-free energy to the City.

In March, the City Council approved the floating-solar project's "second phase agreement," allowing for the design and contracting of the project. NCPA and the City have contracted with Burns & McDonnell to assist with the initial design work and preparation-related agreements. The third and final project phase, estimated to begin in early 2019, will execute final agreements and construct the solar arrays.

If you're interested in the use of renewable energy, the City offers a "Green Rate": Under the Green Rate, the City will assign certified renewable energy to all your energy consumption. Customers choosing the Green Rate will incur a modest fee of 1.8 cents per kWh in a billing period. For more information, go to: <http://bit.ly/2HQog6r> or call Utility Billing at 431-3307.

Finally, we are developing plans to purchase more carbon-free energy, filling the City's energy needs with responsible sources. We'll provide information on these contracts and how they change the City's power mix at a later date.

If you'd like to learn more about your electric-utility department, go to: <http://bit.ly/2JTLsgH>