

NEWS

For Immediate Release
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April 5, 2023

Wallowa County One of Oregon Leaders in Strategic Community Energy Planning

Planning for future energy needs ensures access to state and federal funding for reliable, affordable local power

Wallowa, Ore. — After launching a process for strategic energy planning in early 2022, Wallowa County’s Community Energy Strategic Plan is nearing completion. This Community Energy Plan will be a living blueprint for Wallowa County to focus and guide actions that support a more sustainable, resilient community. The plan is on track for completion this summer and is already driving investment in the county.

Because of the commitment demonstrated by Wallowa County to creating a community energy plan, the county recently secured a \$100,000 Community Renewable Energy Program (CREP) grant from the Oregon Department of Energy to fund planning for a microgrid project to ensure power for critical community services in Wallowa, Enterprise, and Joseph.

“Securing the CREP grant has been a great proof point of the positive impact the Community Energy Strategic Plan will have on our community,” said Joe Basile, Community Energy Program Manager at Wallowa Resources. “The microgrid project is just the beginning of what we hope will be many projects made possible by this energy plan.”

The Community Energy Plan effort is a collaboration between Wallowa County and Wallowa Resources, following a planning guide from the U.S. Department of Energy that has proven successful in communities across the country. Wallowa County’s Community Energy Plan is supported by funding from Energy Trust of Oregon, a nonprofit that helps people, businesses, and communities use less energy. That work includes helping cities and towns across Oregon develop custom, long-term energy solutions which also better positions them to apply for additional funding opportunities.

Like many rural communities, Wallowa County residents are dealing with rising energy costs, aging infrastructure, and higher risk of power shut-offs due to natural disasters. According to a recent study conducted by Wallowa Resources, County residents have experienced a 42% increase in energy costs since Dec. 2021.

“Energy is a critical part of our county’s economy; it affects our homes and our livelihoods,” said Wallowa County Commissioner John Hillock. “The Community Energy Plan will be a very

important resource to guide Wallowa County toward a future that keeps our energy dollars local, and makes our community more energy-resilient.”

In the coming months and years, billions of dollars driven by federal legislation, including the bi-partisan [infrastructure law](#) and [Inflation Reduction Act](#), will head toward states and local communities. Many cities and towns in Oregon are prepared to put this funding into action and enhance their energy planning, thanks in part to years of work in cooperation with Energy Trust and other partners.

“At Energy Trust, we know that energy solutions are not a one-size-fits-all,” said Caryn Appler, Eastern Oregon Outreach Manager at Energy Trust. “That’s why we love working with communities to help them reach their goals with a customized approach. The progress being made in Wallowa is a great model for other communities, and we are looking forward to seeing the positive impacts of the community energy strategic plan in the region.”

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About Energy Trust of Oregon: Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping utility customers and communities benefit from saving energy and generating renewable power. Our services, cash incentives and energy solutions have helped participating customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas and Avista save \$4.6 billion on energy bills. Our work helps keep energy costs as low as possible, creates jobs and builds a sustainable energy future. Learn more at www.energytrust.org.