

The Ojai Valley Green Coalition is taking its first steps towards reducing consumption of energy in our valley by better understanding its usage and encouraging alternatives to conventional sources of electricity.

The OVGCC energy committee has compiled a list of the Valley's top 25 users, topped by Casitas Municipal Water District with 8,239,267 kilowatts and ended with Behavioral Science Technology, using 432,660 kilowatts. They are working with the larger consumers, including schools, local government, and businesses, to help reduce their energy consumption.

For the committee's first project they chose Help of Ojai's West Campus and partnered with the Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance, VCREA. Together they sent out their first joint team to the Campus.

The VCREA is a source advice on energy conservation for the Ojai Valley and will review building plans at no cost. The alliance was created in 2003 to allow public agencies to work together on conservation and innovative use of energy resources in Ventura County.

Along with working on energy conservation the committee encourages consumers to look at the re-vamped California Solar Initiative, a rebate program for solar electrical production affordable for smaller consumers.

The California Solar Initiative is part of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's \$3.3 Billion , "Million Solar Roofs Program", designed to encourage the creation of 3,000 megawatts of new solar-produced electricity by 2017. The solar program operates under the California Public Utilities Commission and provides incentives for existing residential homes, as well as new or existing commercial, industrial, and agricultural properties. Its overall goal is to help build a self-sustaining photovoltaic, solar electricity market. With the new program consumers installing solar can link up to the power grid and theoretically reduce their monthly bill to zero. This works by producing enough solar power on sunny days to offset their use when they are not producing any. The government maintained website, go solar.com, answers frequently asked questions and tells how to start the process.

Last year Sebastopol, a city similar in size to Ojai, set a goal of installing one megawatt of solar power. Ojai has already achieved that goal.

Some other facts:

According to Wikipedia:

- A 50 watt light bulb will consume 50 watt-hours of energy if left on for an hour
- Common appliances that consume approximately 1 kW include hairdryers, microwave ovens, and vacuum cleaners.
- A kilowatt is 1000 watts

According to the U.S. Department of Energy:

- A Megawatt (MW) is 1,000,000 Watts; a Gigawatt (GW) is 1000 Megawatts. Worldwide use of renewable energy increased from 4.969 GW in 1980 to 73.427 GW in 2004.

- The simple act of replacing two 100 watt light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs will save the same amount of energy used by 30 homes.

- An Energy Star furnace or air conditioning system, when properly sized and installed, can save 30-40 % of the electricity used for heating and cooling.
- Home audio and video equipment represent 5% of all domestic electricity consumption using more energy when turned off than when actually in use and costing more than \$3 billion annually while emitting 18 million tons of carbon into the atmosphere.

According to Solar Buzz website:

- Worldwide photovoltaic installations were 1,744 MW in 2006
- In 1985, annual solar installations were only 21 MW.

More information about reducing your energy consumption or using solar:

<http://www.sce.com/RebatesandSavings/CaliforniaSolarInitiative/>

<http://www.solarbuzz.com/FastFactsIndustry.htm>

<http://www.vcenergy.org/index.asp>