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Waldoboro Business Goes Solar

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by John Maguire

[The Lincoln County News](#)

The 60 photovoltaic (pv) solar panels installed on a newly constructed barn at The Jojoba Company in Waldoboro will provide enough energy to supply all of its electric power needs, including heat.

A crew working with Liberty based solar company, ReVision Energy, spent Friday afternoon installing the 13.5 kilowatt system on the large timber frame barn on Robert and Sally Butler's property off the Friendship Rd. Building contractor Brian Daggett of Washington and his workers put up the barn on which the ReVision Energy group installed the panels.

Tied to the power grid, the system will produce 18,000 kilowatts of clean, renewable electricity each year, said Jennifer Albee of ReVision, and it is enough to power the building and run the electric boiler for the barn's radiant heated floor.

The panels take in Direct Current (DC) power from the sun and two inverters inside the building change that energy to Alternating Current (AC) power, which can run anything from radios to lights to the electric boiler.

A digital meter measures incoming and outgoing power to the main grid. Albee said that one of the common misconceptions with solar panels is that they need to be connected to batteries. The grid-tied system on the Butler's barn allows excess power to go out to the main power grid and Central Maine Power gives them a credit. When and if the solar panels aren't producing enough electricity, the Butlers can pull power from the grid and not get charged for the electricity they have stored credit for.

The solar panel company website (www.revisionenergy.com) describes how the systems benefit a consumer as well as the outside world. According to the company, each kilowatt of the grid-tied system produces 1300 kilowatt hours of electricity.

Each installed kilowatt costs roughly \$6500; however, the company recommends a free site evaluation, as price varies according to the complexity of the work.

Buying such a system helps a consumer's pocketbook as time progresses. As it states on the company website, consumers should see a system pay back for its initial cost in less than 20 years. Lacking moving parts and batteries, the grid-tied panels are built to last. Albee said the warrantee on the panels is 25 years, but they are expected to last more than 40.

"They're rugged," she said, also adding that the smooth, black panels clear off piles of snow when even the corners are exposed to the sun.

The advantages of a solar system come from not just producing one's own electricity, but such a system helps the earth. The company

states the solar panels reduce the amount of carbon emissions entering into the earth's atmosphere by thousands of pounds each year. The solar panel systems also cut back on sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions, since they take away from use of electric power sourced from energy systems relying on oil and coal.

The system installed on the Butler's barn will save 24,950 pounds of carbon emissions from emitting into the earth's atmosphere annually, Albee said.

"It's a pretty radical idea," Albee said of running all of one's electric power needs from the sun. "Not only are they making an economic investment, but people are putting their money where their mouth is."

Increased fuel costs last winter spurred interest among home and business owners in alternative energy. She said between both offices in Portland and Liberty, the company has installed over 2000 systems. She credits most of the increased demand for solar systems on individual households, but the company is also seeing a strong commercial interest due to federal incentives.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act offers a 30 percent tax credit of the overall cost of the system for businesses and individuals. Business owners can also apply for a federal grant to help with costs associated with the installation, Albee said. Efficiency Maine also offers a \$2000 state rebate, which she said requires an energy audit.

"I highly recommend an energy audit to anyone," she said, adding that the benefits of knowing how much energy one could save on their home through insulation is well worth the cost of the audit.

The renewable energy company has installed systems throughout New England. Nearby local clients include Camp Kieve in Nobleboro and The Chewonki Foundation, as well as The Maine State Housing Authority, restaurants, inns and schools. For more information about the installation of solar panels, visit the company website at: www.revisionenergy.com.

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