

Coos County



Public Entities:.....In Coos County
Project Type:.....Lighting, HVAC
Stimulus Funds: ...\$811,780
Savings/yr:\$162,012

Coos County public entities obtain sought-after energy awards

If any county needed some of the US Department of Energy's stimulus funds for energy projects, it was Coos County, Oregon.

This southwestern Oregon county bordering the Pacific Ocean has a population of 63,500 and had an unemployment rate of 12.8 percent in August 2010. The Coos County rate was higher than the Oregon average of 10.6 percent and the national average of 9.6 percent for the same time period.

So it was good news when the Oregon Department of Energy announced 22 awards for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds through its State Energy Program and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant went to Coos County public entities in a competitive application process. Only Lane County received more energy awards.

The awards went to the City of Coos Bay, City of North Bend, Coos County, North Bend and Powers School Districts. The total amount of all awards was \$811,780.

It was welcome news for both the public entities and for local contractors (see separate article on Reese Electric).

City of Coos Bay

Randy Dixon, Operations Superintendent for the City of Coos Bay, just began his employment with the City of Coos Bay in the summer of 2010, but he knew immediately how much the City needs the energy stimulus awards.

"This is a wonderful program," Dixon said. "If we can save money on our electrical use, it gives us more money for the general fund."

The City received a State Energy Program

award for \$4,700 to retrofit the lighting in its streets and maintenance shop where staff repair city vehicles, including police cars, and make city signs. The old lights take several hours to warm up and "give you a headache," according to staff.



City of Coos Bay Operations Superintendent Randy Dixon shows Oregon Dept. of Energy Project Manager Shanda Shribbs the old lights in the City's Shop.

Coos Bay, not known for its excess of sunny days, can be dark and gloomy, so good lighting is important, said Dixon. The old lights will be replaced with energy efficient T-8s and are expected to save 46 percent on electrical costs, approximately \$1,121 per year.

The City of Coos Bay also received a Block Grant for \$81,224 for a \$138,133 street lighting project. The current lights consist of 69 high-pressure sodium (HPS) lights, 86 triple globe decorative period lights, and 238 single globe decorative period lights that are used an average of 12 hours/day for 365 days a year. Dixon said the City also received \$22,913 from the Energy Trust of Oregon to help pay for the lighting project. The new energy-efficient HPS and metal halide lights are expected to save the City \$8,912 per year in electrical costs.

The new lights and fixtures are being purchased directly from the local Platt Electric

"These projects certainly helped us stay afloat."

*-Randy Rema
Reese Electric*



store. A licensed electrician, with help from City workers, will install the lights over a five-month time period.

Dixon has been busy during his first few months on the job assessing the City's facilities and needs. He's pleased the City received the funds it did as they will be put to good use.

City of North Bend

The City of North Bend's wastewater treatment facility staff's role is to maintain 240,000 feet of infrastructure sewer mains, nine pumping stations, and a two million gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant. The plant can handle up to 10 million gallons-per-day during wet weather.



Oregon Dept. of Energy Project Manager Shanda Shribbs meets with City of North Bend Finance Director Matt Zook, center, and Superintendent Public Works Director Bob Dillard, right, concerning the energy efficiency project at the City's wastewater treatment plant that is funded by the Recovery Act.

study revealed that by retrofitting aeration basin diffusers and blowers, the wastewater facility will have more control and should save considerable energy. Savings were estimated to be \$11,366 per year if the retrofit project could be funded.

The City had no budget to implement the project, but the Oregon Department of Energy was able to provide a State Energy Program award in July 2010 to fund \$217,800 for the project.

Superintendent of Public Works Bob Dillard and Finance Director Matt Zook are delighted to receive the grant. It will make the wastewater facility more efficient and save the City considerable funds every year the facility operates.

In January 2010, the City of North Bend received a Block Grant from the Oregon Department of Energy for an energy efficiency feasibility study on its wastewater facility. The

Coos County

Coos County has a variety of older buildings to maintain. The North Bend Annex is located in North Bend. The main County building, Courthouse and jail are in Coquille where the county seat is located. The Parks/Forestry and Road Departments are in smaller buildings on the outskirts of Coquille.



New energy-efficient lights in the Coos County Courthouse were well received by staff and citizens. Recovery Act funds paid for the lighting.

The North Bend Annex was an old hospital which was converted many years ago to an office building. Because it was a hospital, the two large boilers in the basement were oversized for 24/7 operation. The County used its \$23,060 Block Grant award to replace the boilers with a new natural gas boiler.

"It's quite a bit smaller," said John Vesterby, building maintenance. "But, it seems to keep up quite well with the demand."

"And, it is so much quieter than the two old boilers," added Virginia Harris, maintenance assistant for the County.

"Before we had to get special PS300 oil," she said. "We had the only two buildings on the South Coast that used it so a truck had to come all the way from Portland just to make our delivery. It was very costly."

The new natural gas boiler eliminates that cost, but was only possible after the natural gas pipeline into Coos County was recently completed. The county's usage helps support the economic development impact of the gas line.

The County also received \$14,448 for retrofitting the Courthouse lighting. Harris said the lights went from dim and yellow to bright and white and "made a huge, huge difference." The County combined the lighting retrofit project with installing a dropped ceiling that saves on heating and improves appearances.

The Courthouse, parts of which were built in 1926 and others in 1953, also got a new energy efficient

natural gas boiler. It replaced an old oil boiler that was declining in performance. According to Ken Gross, maintenance director, and Harris, the old boiler went out for a week in December 2009 and it

took a week to get the parts delivered to repair it. Fortunately, the building had some electric heat to rely on so the County could stay open.

The building would be cold all day on Mondays, according to Harris, as it took several hours to get up to temperature. Additionally, the County would get phone calls from concerned citizens when the boiler did fire up because a plume of black

smoke would erupt from the building.

“There was a lot of black soot on the roof,” said Harris. The new natural gas boiler is burning much cleaner. “Now there is just a tiny bit of vapor.” Commercial Air, Inc. of Eugene won the contract for the boiler replacement.

All the contractors worked around the County’s office hours. “They made it easy on us,” said Harris. “They even worked at night to stay out of peoples’ way.”

The building for the Health and Juvenile Departments also got new lights. The basement area that holds the law library is open for the public once a week, but the rows of law books were difficult to see because it was dark and there were partial windows on only one side.

The County Jail, built in January 1988, got new lights throughout the common areas and in the cells. Coos County Jail holds 97 prisoners.

“It’s brighter, but also safer,” said Dale Baker, maintenance supervisor. “The security cameras have much better resolution with the new lights.”

The County replaced all the old T-12 lighting at the Parks/Forestry Departments and the Road Department with high performance, energy-efficient T-8s. The new lights are estimated to have a useful life of 6 to 8 years; the ballasts are estimated to last 35 to 50 years. The project will provide an offset of 12 tons of CO₂ annually, equal to taking two cars off the road.

The Road Department also received an award for replacing six old propane heaters with natural gas heaters that will automatically cut off if the doors are opened and remain opened.

Harris made the most of the County’s awards and supplemented the Recovery Act (stimulus) awards with Oregon Department of Energy Business En-

ergy Tax Credits and incentives from the Energy Trust of Oregon. The Recovery Act funds must be deducted from the eligible tax credit costs by statute, so it does reduce the final amount of the tax credit. The County will then transfer its tax credit to a private citizen or company with tax liability in exchange for a cash payment. The total of the Recovery Act award, Business Energy Tax Credit cash payment and Energy Trust financial incentives may not be more than the final cost of the project. The County did have to provide the difference for all projects, but Harris helped ensure that the County got the incentives which the projects qualified for.

Reese Electric of North Bend won all the lighting contracts. Jones Plumbing and Heating in Coquille did the Roads Department heating system retrofit.

North Bend School District

“We would never have been able to afford to do these projects without the stimulus funds,” said Rhonda Hof-fine, Maintenance Supervisor with the North Bend School District. “It made a huge difference. The lighting is much better and the cost savings to the district is important.”



The “old” boiler at Coos County Courthouse would send up a plume of black smoke each time it fired up causing Coquille residents to phone county offices.



The “new” boiler at the Coos County Courthouse is an energy-efficient natural gas boiler.

North Bend School District received four awards for new lights at the Middle School, High School, North Bay Elementary School and the District administration building. The T-12s were retrofitted to more energy efficient T-



Maintenance Supervisor Rhonda Hoffine, right, discusses the two newly installed water heaters at North Bend Middle School with the school maintenance's staff.

8s. Most of the lighting covers had yellowed and were dingy. These are now clear and the lights are white and bright.

Mr. Carpani, math teacher at the Middle School, noticed the difference "These new lights are great!" he said.

The High School and Middle School cafeterias were areas where the new lights made "a night and day"

difference, according to Hoffine.

The High School also saw an increase in brightness with the new light installation. The gym, built in 1976, shows off the county's timber resources with a wood panel chevron pattern on the walls. The darkness of the wood

also absorbs light so the gym was a fairly dark place. The new lights noticeably brighten the gym.

North Bend School District also got new water heaters for North Bend Middle School and Hillcrest Elementary. At the middle school, maintenance had to run the boiler full time to get hot water.



North Bend Middle School math teacher, Mr. Carpani, saw a much brighter room when he returned to teaching this fall.

Hoffine knows how tight the district budget is. She has worked for the district since 1986 and manages the Food Services Department including the Summer Food Program and the Food Program for Reedsport Schools. As if that wasn't enough, in early 2010, Hoffine was also asked to manage the Maintenance Department.

"I've got a great crew," said Hoffine. "They are amazing and a huge help to me." She was also pleased with the timing of the stimulus awards. Although it meant more work initially, she knows it will pay off with time and make it easier on maintenance staff.

Powers School District

Powers, is a small community of 734 located 21 miles from Myrtle Point in a river canyon surrounded by towering timber. The Powers School District received a Recovery Act award of \$3,110 for installing lights in the elementary school play shed.

The Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) awarded these energy project American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds through the State Energy Program and the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant. These funds are designated for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. The U.S. Department of Energy administers the funds, approves the projects and reviews the state's progress. The Oregon Department of Energy has \$42.1 million in SEP funding and \$9.5 million in Block Grant funding.

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Stimulus funds make a difference to Coos County lighting contractor

Coos County electrical contractor Randy Rema can tell you that being a small business owner in Coos County is tough these days.

"Private dollars are just not there," said Rema, the owner of Reese Electric. "It's been a struggle."

The 63-year-old North Bend family-owned business went from \$7.2 million in sales in 2007 and 2008 to \$5.8 in 2009 and \$4.2 million through nine months of 2010. Rema has had to cut his employees from a high of 63 in 2007 to 33 in 2010.

When the Oregon Department of Energy awarded American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds to several public entities in Coos County, the primary purpose was to stimulate the economy and put Americans back to work.

Rema is the first to say that the federal funds have made a difference.

"These projects certainly helped us stay afloat. It has been a tough year and a half and these projects came along at a very slow time for



North Bend High School

us. They made a big difference in a lot of ways."

The stimulus funds required that Davis-Bacon wages (or Bureau of Labor and Industry wages, whichever are higher) had to be paid. Rema, a union contractor, was able to hire two journeyman electricians back to work with the jobs he

won. In addition, he hired two late-term apprentices back to work. They were close to completing their 8,000-hour training requirement, but just needed more hours. They are now journeymen.

"I felt really good about that," Rema said. "They really worked hard, and were very appreciative for the work and money to feed their families."



North Bend High School

In addition to stimulating the economy and his business with jobs, Rema is eager to point out the energy savings that the Coos County entities will realize from the projects this year and each year after.

"I was amazed," he said. "The lighting projects we worked on will save 1,172,832 kilowatt hours of electricity each year." That is enough electricity to heat 98 average Oregon homes each year.

Rema and his employees are grateful for the stimulus project work that Reese Electric bid on and won. It made a big difference to this contractor in Coos County.

**Create new jobs
and
save existing ones.**

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Recovery.gov

On Feb. 13, 2009, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 at the urging of President Obama, who signed it into law four days later. A direct response to the economic crisis, the Recovery Act has three immediate goals:

- Create new jobs and save existing ones
- Spur economic activity and invest in long-term growth
- Foster unprecedented levels of accountability and transparency in government spending