

Conservation Corner (Appeared in the *Ferry County View*, May 16, 2018)

Renewable Energy Incentive – Washington State offers program to Encourage Renewable

Have you ever considered generating your own electricity with solar panels, wind mills or anaerobic digesters? Now may be a good time for taking this step.

The State of Washington is offering a new incentive program for renewable energy systems. While there has been a renewable energy incentive program in effect in the state for several years, its term is coming to an end and being replaced by this new program. Signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee in July 2017, the program provides incentive payments for homeowners, as well as commercial and community energy consumers.



Homeowners who wish to install renewable energy systems under this new program may be eligible for payments of \$0.16 per kilowatt hour (KWH) of energy produced (slightly more if the equipment purchased is manufactured in Washington). The system must be grid-tied and not connected to batteries to be eligible for the incentive payment. These payments will be received for eight years or until 50% of the total system price is

reached – whichever comes first.

As an additional bonus, the federal government is offering a 30% tax credit on qualifying alternative systems. So, for example, if a homeowner spends \$15,000 on a system in 2018, he or she will be able to claim a \$4500 rebate on this year's income tax. If the maximum incentive amount (50% of the original expenditure) is reached, the net cost this system will be just \$3000.

The true sweetener in the mix is that any power produced by the system offsets the homeowner's power bill. Even a small amount of monthly savings from such power production will further reduce the remaining \$3000 in the above example. And, if and when the system is paid for, any additional production is simply money saved by the homeowner.

Though qualifying systems may be installed through June 2021, the per-KWH rate will start decreasing after June 30, 2018. The federal tax rebate will also start declining after the end of 2018. In addition, there are upper limits on the budget for the State program and on the amount each local utility has available for incentive payments. When the limit is reached in a utility

area, the payments will be reduced. For all of these reasons, it is important to get started planning your system as soon as possible.

Visit the Solar Washington website (https://www.solarwa.org/solar_for_homeowners) for information on evaluating your home for solar sizing, pricing, financing and installing your system as well as hiring a solar contractor. Visit <http://www.energy.wsu.edu/> (click on Renewable Energy Incentive program) for more information and for an on-line program application.

Several Ferry County residents have recently taken advantage of these incentives and installed photovoltaic (solar) panels on their property. They would be willing to show off their systems and share their experiences with other interested homeowners. Please contact Bill Chamberlin at the Ferry Conservation District (509-775-3473, ext. 109) to arrange to see one of these systems.



(Photos: National Park Service and Government of Yukon)