



New array to power northern Taos County

Staff report

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If all goes to plan, every home and business between Questa and the Colorado border will be powered with solar energy on sunny days within the next few months.

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative held a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday (April 10) at the site of a 1.5 megawatt array near Amalia, expected to be completed by May of this year.

“This project represents a unique collaboration between entities that, while very different, have common goals,” said co-op CEO Luis Reyes in a press release. “In addition, this array is helping create local jobs as well as provide energy independence by generating enough electricity to power 376 average New Mexico homes for an entire year.

The Amalia array will add to the renewable power already available in northern Taos County.

In 2011, Chevron mining completed a 1 megawatt array built by Chevron atop a brownfield west of Questa. Power from that array is also used by Kit Carson Electric customers.

The co-op says the combined solar energy from the two arrays will be enough to power its members between Questa and the Colorado border while the sun is shining.

The Amalia array is being built on 15 acres owned by the Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association. It will consist of 5,280 “single axis tracking” panels that follow the sun as it crosses the sky.

Dignitaries on hand for the groundbreaking included U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján, DNM, as well as state and local elected officials.

The array will be owned and operated by Virginia-based Washington Gas Energy Systems.

Standard Solar of Maryland will install the system, with project management by Taos-based Paradise Power Company and the support of Amalia Construction Company.

The co-op has entered into a 25-year purchase-power agreement to buy all energy produced at the Amalia array.

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Luis Reyes, CEO of Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, speaks at a groundbreaking ceremony for a new solar array near Amalia. To his left, is Bobby Ortega, president of the Kit Carson Board of Trustees.

Submitted photo