



Big Sky School District #72

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PRESS RELEASE

The Big Sky School District has been awarded a Universal System Benefits (USB) Renewable Energy Grant from NorthWestern Energy to help fund the installation of solar power at the Ophir School, and educational tools for all students grade K-12.

The 7.125 kW solar photovoltaic (PV) array will be designed and installed on the school rooftop by Energy 1 during the spring of 2017. This solar installation will produce clean energy and brings with it many educational opportunities for the students and Big Sky community. Big Sky Schools selected the award winning Solar 4R Schools™ program that will be available online for all Big Sky students, offering one of the most comprehensive K-12 renewable energy STEM education experiences in the nation. An interactive kiosk will be installed in the school lobby as an educational tool for the students, staff and community about the onsite solar energy production. The solar project is estimated to cost about \$39,000. A grant from NorthWestern Energy and its customers, through the USB, will cover about \$29,000 of the system cost. The USB program, created by the Montana Legislature, is funded by a monthly charge on the bills of Montana regulated utility customers. USB money is used to fund programs promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy and for financial assistance to low-income energy users. The balance of the project cost is being funded by donations from the Bulis Family and Highline Partners.

Big Sky School District Superintendent Dustin Shipman looks forward to the new opportunities this installation will offer. “The educational opportunities available through this technology, as well as economic and climate benefits, are immeasurable,” stated Dr. Shipman, “We are hopeful that this Phase I project is just the beginning and that we can expand our clean energy production even more in the future and do our part to tread lightly. Many thanks to our donors, to Lisa Lillelund of Mango Networks for coordinating this grant and to Leo Crane of Energy 1 for technical support.”

“The Ophir School, along with its teachers and staff, is such an important and pivotal part of the local community,” added Leo Crane of Energy 1. “As a Montana-based company, Energy 1 is committed to giving back and is proud to support Ophir School in the first installation of solar energy for the Big Sky School District. Together with Ophir School, it is our goal to educate students and the general public on solar and other forms of renewable technology.”

There will be a community event in early summer to unveil the solar installation with experts on hand to explain how the system works and how the students and community can access the online tools to view the production data and to learn more about renewable energy.

For questions and further information, contact: Lisa Lillelund, Mango Networks, lisa@mangonetworks.com, Tel. 978-590-9212.

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