



# PUT THE SUN TO WORK FOR YOU



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### **Q: Why is Stearns Electric building a community solar project?**

To provide a simple, convenient and cost effective way for our members to participate in solar generation.

### **Q: How large is the Stearns Electric Community Solar Project?**

The array will be comprised of fifty (50), 410 watt panels for a total capacity of 20.5 KW. Each 410 watt panel is approximately 6.5' x 4.5'.

### **Q: What kind of solar system is it?**

The system is manufactured by tenKSolar, a Minnesota based company.

### **Q: Where is the array located?**

Stearns Electric's Branch Office in St. Joseph.

### **Q: What is the cost?**

The cost purchase the output from one panel for 13 years is \$845.

### **Q: How can I participate in Stearns Electric's Community Solar Project?**

It's very simple. Only Stearns Electric Association members are eligible to participate and must complete the Community Solar License Agreement Form and return it to the Cooperative with your payment. Agreements will be available online at [www.stearnslectric.org](http://www.stearnslectric.org) or in either of the Cooperative's offices. The actual amount will vary from month to month, and season to season.

### **Q: What does the panel cost cover?**

It is important to understand that as a member you are purchasing the rights to the output of a panel for the next 19 years, not the physical panel itself. Stearns Electric will provide all necessary maintenance, insurance and any other costs for the life of the project. The Cooperative will make certain that the array meets all applicable codes, standards, and regulatory requirements at the time of installation and throughout the term of the agreement.

### **Q: How can I pay?**

Cash, check or credit cards are accepted. The Cooperative will also be offering a financing option.

### **Q: How does this compare in cost to solar I could install at my home?**

We feel on a cost per watt basis that this offering is very competitive with no hassles for the member.

### **Q: How much output can I buy?**

The beauty of this program is that you can choose your level of participation. The maximum output you can purchase is limited by your average annual usage or 5 panels, whichever is less.

### **Q: How much would my credit be worth each month?**

If you purchased the output from one panel, it is estimated to produce an average of 530 kWh per year or about 44 kWh per month. At 2014 rates, this would be equivalent to reducing your electric bill about \$5 a month. It is assumed that if the cost of electricity continues to increase over the next 18 years, the value of your kWh would increase incrementally as well.

**Q: How is the credit given?**

The monthly kWh production of the entire Community Solar Project will be metered and recorded on a calendar month basis. The total kWh output of the project will be divided by the number of solar panels in the array (50). Appropriate credits will be applied to member bills the month following production (September generation would be credited to the member on the bill they receive in October). Solar credits will be calculated using the general service energy rate and will appear on your electric bill as a line item.

**Q: Does the weather and change in seasons affect the solar production?**

Both the weather and seasonal changes will affect the amount of sun reaching the panels. During the summer, the panels will produce more energy because the days are longer and the sun is higher. If it's a cloudy day, the panels will produce less. During the winter, there will be less production because of limited hours of sunlight and at times potential snow coverage.

**Q: Can I track the production of the solar array?**

We have a live feed on our website which shows the real-time production of the Community Solar array for members and the public to observe.

**Q: If I do not purchase now, can I buy later?**

Yes you can, provided we have panels available. Subscriptions are on a first come, first serve basis, while panels are available.

**Q: What if I move?**

If you move to another location within Stearns Electric's service territory your panel output will move with you to your new account. If you move off our system you can transfer the panel output to another member, friend, family member or organization that is a member of Cooperative. We can assist you with identifying an interested member/organization. If you are unable to find someone to transfer the output to, a discounted buyout option is available.

**Q: Where does the electricity go when the system is producing energy?**

This system is interconnected with the electric grid, so the output goes directly onto our distribution wires.

**Q: Does the system have a battery backup system?**

No. The cost for the battery backup system is currently too expensive to warrant the cost.

**Q: Does the system work in the event of a power outage?**

No. All renewable systems with an inverter and no battery backup require line voltage to function and will not generate during an outage. In the event of equipment failure, Stearns Electric will bring the equipment back to working order as quickly as is reasonably possible.

**Q: What if the project is not completed?**

If the project is not completed, members will be refunded.

**Q: What happens at the end of the project's 20-year life?**

We are not certain at this time. The panels could be replaced, re-commissioned for more years of service, or decommissioned/removed and site returned to previous use. In 20 years we will be able to better assess the long-term performance of the tenKsolar panels, as well as new technologies available in 2035.

**Q: If I'm not participating in the Community Solar Project are my electric rates supporting this program?**

This project is competitively priced without the need for subsidies from the Cooperative or between members.



[www.stearnslectric.org](http://www.stearnslectric.org)

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