

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. REP MCINTYRE AND USDA PRESENT SOLAR PROJECT GRANT TO BRUNSWICK ELECTRIC

SHALLOTTE, NC, July 5, 5 pm - - - A new 14,000 sq foot warehouse at the headquarters of Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation (BEMC) will use solar power for about half of its electric needs, with help from a grant from the USDA Rural Development program. U.S. Representative Mike McIntyre, USDA Rural Development State Director Randall Gore and Area Director, Rossie Bullock visited the electric cooperative to present the \$46,497 grant check to Robert W. Leavitt Jr., CEO of BEMC.

Since Rural Development's renewable energy and energy efficiency programs were launched in 2003, they have played a key role in helping more than 6,000 local businesses create jobs and make energy efficiency improvements. Under the Rural Energy for America program, local businesses receive assistance to deploy wind, solar and other forms of renewable energy. In 2010, the Rural Energy for America program invested over \$180 million in renewable energy projects across the country, including about \$3.8 million in North Carolina.

Monte Herring worked closely with USDA and NC Electric Membership Cooperatives Vice President for Community Development to apply for the grant, which funds about 25% of the project. John Sawyer Architects of Wilmington designed the project and provided specifications.

About the technology:

Herring says, "We are using a thin film photovoltaic (PV) system because it is highly effective in producing energy at varying angles to the sun, while also meeting criteria for this area's wind conditions."

The PV laminate is composed of a thin-film PV material encapsulated in UV-stabilized, weather-resistant polymers, and will be bonded to the metal roof. This material is lightweight, flexible and contains no glass that could potentially break. A back reflector layer allows for improved light trapping, contributing to the product's efficiency.

Herring notes, “This system will produce energy when the sun is low in the sky, through cloud cover and when installed at non-ideal angles to the sun’s path. It’s the most efficient technology available on the market today. Using about 8,000 sq feet of south-facing roof we will be able to produce about 30 kW of power, enough to cover about half of the warehouse’s power requirement.”

CEO Robert W. Leavitt, Jr. comments, “Our goal is to offset the additional need for power for the warehouse and provide a model for future projects in this area. We plan to partner with local educators, businesses and government agencies to use this as a working demonstration of solar power technology in action.

We appreciate the assistance from Rep. McIntyre and the USDA Rural Development staff to help us secure this grant. Mike McIntyre has been a strong advocate for rural development and a great supporter of Rural Utilities Services and the entire cooperative movement. This is one of many times he has stood with BEMC to bring project support to our area.”

Leavitt continues, “BEMC is committed to diversifying the sources of power that we use to serve our membership, and renewable energy is a small but important part of that mix. Energy efficiency is yet another important component of providing responsible power and we always encourage our members to use energy wisely. This solar project will help us meet the NC requirements to supply a growing percentage of our power from renewable sources, starting with 3% in 2012. Balancing the cost of power with the need to increase generation from renewable resources is an ongoing challenge. Our sources will continue to include nuclear, coal, and natural gas as we gradually add renewable sources like this solar project to the mix. Today, we take another important step into the energy future of America.”

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About BEMC:

BEMC is a locally owned and operated not-for-profit corporation. It is the second largest electric cooperative in North Carolina, serving nearly 86,000 member locations in Brunswick, Columbus, Bladen and Robeson counties.

BEMC is affiliated with Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of 700 local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives providing high standards of service to more than 40 million customers in 46 states every day.

7/5/11—BEMC Solar Project Grant from USDA Rural Development

Photo of a similar installation of thin film photovoltaic material



The new BEMC warehouse.
The solar installation will cover about 8,000 sq ft of the south-facing roof.





USDA Rural Development State Director Randall Gore and U.S. Representative Mike McIntyre Present Solar Project Grant Check to BEMC CEO Robert W. Leavitt Jr. (7/5/11)

I-r, front: Monte Herring, BEMC; Randall Gore, USDA Rural Dev State Director; U.S. Rep Mike McIntyre; Robert W. Leavitt, Jr, CEO of BEMC

I-r, rear: Brunswick County Commissioner Charles Warren; Rossie Bullock, USDA Rural Dev Area Director,;

Eddie Miller, VP Community Development for NCAEC; Bill Tew, USDA Rural Dev, Energy Specialist;

Bobby Davis, VP Tech Services, BEMC; and Calvin Duncan, BEMC Director and Treasurer.