

# Geysers celebrate 50 years of energy production

Denise Rockenstein, Lake County Record Bee, 5-27-10

MIDDLETOWN -- Fifty years of geothermal energy production at The Geysers was celebrated Wednesday at the Middletown Treatment Plant on Highway 175. The celebration also served as a dedication of a new solar array system at the plant showcasing the innovative environmental stewardship of the Northern California Power Agency (NCPA), a joint action agency serving a variety of public entities.

The solar array is just one part of the state-of-the-art renewable energy system pioneered by NCPA's 17 member communities. It combines solar, hydroelectric and geothermal power to produce reliable and affordable green energy for California. The Geysers is the largest geothermal field in the world covering about 30 square miles in the Mayacamas Mountains of Lake and Sonoma counties. It currently provides more than five percent of the state's electricity needs and generates an amount of electricity equivalent to more than 60 percent of the electricity needs of the entire north coast region, stretching from San Francisco to Oregon.

Several dignitaries representing politicians serving the area addressed Wednesday's crowd, recognizing the technological advancements integrated into what is considered to be one of the most sophisticated and unique renewable energy systems in the world.

Larry Hansen, a member of the Lodi City Council and chairman of the NCPA, served as master of ceremonies. "The Geysers is indispensable to the City of Lodi," he said. "It's a big part of the reason why Lodi, as well as so many other NCPA member communities, currently exceeds the state's RPS requirements."

Jim Pope, NCPA general manager, spoke of The Geysers' pipeline project, which he said is the world's first integrated wastewater geothermal system. He commended NCPA project managers and Lake County project coordinator Mark Dellinger.

"This integration of hydroelectric, solar and geothermal resources into a single dynamic project is unique and exemplifies NCPA's ethic of environmental protection and technological innovation," Pope said. "This project provides real and lasting benefits for NCPA member utilities and their ratepayers."

The solar array dedicated on Wednesday produces energy to help pump the treated wastewater 26 miles uphill to its Geysers Geothermal Energy Plant for injection into the steam field. The wastewater geothermal injection system resulted from a unique inter-governmental partnership between NCPA and the Lake County Sanitation District (LACOSAN). According to the NCPA, the agency needed a new, reliable source of water for injection and the local sanitation districts needed a home for their treated wastewater effluent. NCPA said the energy and environmental benefits were immediate and continue to this day.

District 1 Supervisor Jim Comstock described the partnership between the county and NCPA as a wonderful marriage. "The geothermal industry provides a tremendous amount of jobs and economical support for the county," he said. "This is a win-win situation. The use of effluent wastewater from Lake County represents a successful inter-governmental partnership that provides an economic solution for both of us and for NCPA."

Comstock said he wants the United States to be an independent energy nation and this is the start of that.

Dan Pelliser, speaking on behalf of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, called The Geysers one of California's energy resource crown jewels. He said the governor is impressed with the accomplishments of the renewable

energy project and appreciates the NCPA's long term commitment to turning California into a renewable energy state.

Other representatives included those speaking on behalf of Congressman Mike Thompson, Senator Pat Wiggins and Assemblymember Noreen Evans.

Gina Adams, chief consultant for the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee also spoke. "The NCPA stewardship is setting an example for others and we look forward to seeing what NCPA does in the future," she said.

Before inviting guests to tour the treatment facility, Pope commended one final person, Murray Grande, director of renewable resources development, for his 30 years of service "improving The Geysers one innovation a time."

NCPA entered the geothermal business in 1983. For the past 25 years, the agency has been operating two geothermal power plants at The Geysers, each with a rated capacity of 110 mega-watts.