

YOSEMITE SHINES



PHOTO: AL GOLUB/GOLUB PHOTOGRAPHY

The location of Yosemite's photovoltaic system was chosen carefully for its large amount of sunlight and lack of serious weather.

Yosemite National Park is leading the nation with a new photovoltaic (solar) system recently opened at the El Portal Complex, two miles west of the park entrance at Highway 140. The \$5.8 million project was unveiled on July 27 at a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Yosemite National Park Superintendent Don Neubacher, and attended by representatives from the offices of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Congressman Jeff Denham (R-19), Mariposa County Supervisor Lee Stetson, contractors, and National Park Service staff.

The new solar energy system is the largest of any national park; a 672 kilowatt (KW) system that consists of 2,800 solar panels and produces an estimated 800,000 kilowatt hours (KWh) per year. The electricity generated by the system is anticipated to reduce the amount of electricity Yosemite purchases by almost 12 percent, saving the park about \$50,000 per year, and affording the park a \$700,000 rebate from Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (PG&E) over the next five years.

The money saved by the park will pass into the park's general budget, where it will increase funding for trail and habitat restoration and other park operations.

The site at El Portal was selected

for its photovoltaic potential; the Maintenance and Administrative Complex lies in an open canyon that collects a large amount of direct sunlight. The location was also chosen for the lack of weather impacts; at 2,000 feet of elevation it receives very little snow, so little that, according to Yosemite National Park spokesman Scott Gediman, "you just have to use a broom to get the snow off the solar panels."

The project was approved early last year and funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Primary contractor Paragon Industrial Applications (PIA) and main subcontractor SunTrek Solar completed construction in February 2011. The system came online in June 2011, after an inspection and interconnection agreement with PG&E.

The El Portal facility currently includes park offices, a vehicle maintenance facility, the park warehouse, and other park operations. Said Neubacher, "The collaborative effort to design and build this system has come to fruition and we are extremely proud of the results. We are committed to being a leader in renewable energy and this project exemplifies our efforts." -Vane/NPS

FOI TEAMS UP WITH MMST

By Nancy Fiddler

Friends of the Inyo's Summer of Stewardship got a boost when Mammoth Mountain Ski Team members pitched in to work on a Duck Pass trail project. For Friends of the Inyo, it was an opportunity to involve a local youth program in its continuing efforts to preserve our local backcountry through trail maintenance and repair. For the MMST athletes, it was a way to give back to the land where they hike, run, and ski.

The athletes got a great workout and the satisfaction of a job well done, and Friends of the Inyo made headway on the repair of a trampled, eroded section of creekside trail.

A group of Alpine and Nordic skiers, coaches, parents, and FOI staff gathered at the trailhead for a speed hike to the work site. Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit supported the effort by transporting tools and lunch. After a quick trip to Duck Pass, the group spent some time shoveling a lingering patch of snow that was hindering the passage of the pack trains. Removing the snow would enable stock to stay on the trail and limit the formation of impromptu trails by hikers and stock on the switchbacks.

The big project of the day took

place at the outlet of Barney Lake. The Duck Pass trail is a popular backcountry access and the combination of a big winter and subsequent heavy usage has caused some significant trail damage, especially in the fragile meadows. With rock bars, shovels, bags, and tarps, the skiers lifted, carried, pried, and hauled rocks and other materials to the damaged trail. Large rocks were fitted into place as steps and inserted to check the flow of water, while plenty of rock fill completed the effort to stop the erosion.

Fueled by a great lunch provided by FOI, the group worked into the afternoon, when even this group of young and very fit athletes finally ran out of energy. It was a good day of work and everyone left with a sense of pride in what was accomplished. With just a few finishing touches, this section of trail should withstand the toll of snow, water, stock, and hikers for some decades to come.

Thanks to Friends of the Inyo for the opportunity for MMST athletes to be a part of the Summer of Stewardship, the Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit, and finally to the participating skiers, coaches, and parents.

SOS CONTINUES INTO THE FALL



PHOTO: MLTPA

On Sept. 11, nearly 40 volunteers braved threatening gray skies to pick up trash and do trail maintenance at Convict Lake, one of the busiest recreation areas on the Inyo National Forest. From age 8 months to 80-plus, the participants removed over 400 lbs. of rubbish and improved 3 miles of trail on what had been billed as the final "trail day" in MLTPA and Friends of the Inyo's Summer of Stewardship (SOS). However, as they enjoyed lunch provided by Convict Lake Resort, MLTPA President John Wentworth announced that two more events had been added to the schedule, pushing SOS into the fall.

Through a winning combination of community involvement, business support, grant funding and local nonprofits, well over 200 volunteers made this season the biggest success yet — and there's more to come!

For details on upcoming events, visit mltpa.org and friendsoftheinyo.org. -Corless

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