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### [County OKs 4 solar permits](#)

Friday, August 20, 2010

Chaves County Commissioners unanimously approved four special-use permits for solar power during their monthly meeting, Thursday. The permits are associated with 13 separate locations in the county where solar panels are being set up to power agricultural equipment.

Twelve of the sites belong to Sunrise Energy Ventures, a company based in Wayzata, Minn., which develops and operates photovoltaic equipment. The other site belongs to JJM Farms, a privately owned farming and ranching operation headquartered in Dexter.

Kirk Kindred, project developer for Sunrise, said construction on its project will begin immediately, and will help agriculture-related businesses by using solar energy to assist in powering irrigation pumps.

Kindred said agricultural equipment and solar energy are a natural fit. "These things are running a lot during daylight hours and in the summer," he said.

JJM Farms signed a 10-year lease with an independent dealer for Infinergy Wind and Solar. That project, which has already been constructed, uses solar panels to power irrigation pumps and sprinkler equipment.

Tom Berry, owner of the local Infinergy dealership, said the customer will begin saving money right off the bat. "The way our program is set up, we actually pay for the entire system," he said. "The customer pays what amounts to about a 25 percent discount from what he was paying for the power to the utility company."

At the end of the lease, the customer has the option to pay fair market value for the equipment. "We estimate that if they were to buy it in 10 years, it would pay for itself within the next two-and-a-half to three years. From then on, all of their power would be free."

Both projects are in cooperation with Xcel Energy and are installed on and tied in to the commercial power grid. Excess power generated during the day is exported into the grid and the customer receives credits. At night, when solar power is unavailable, the power is imported back from the grid.

"Renewable energy can be a really great addition to the energy mix for a farmer or a rancher," said Wes Reeves, spokesman for Xcel Energy. "What we are essentially doing is bringing our customers on as partners in the effort to increase our renewable offering."

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