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OREGON CONVENTION CENTER JOINS CLEAN ENERGY OFFSET PROGRAM

Investing in biogas development is the latest effort by the Pacific Northwest's largest meeting facility to reduce its carbon footprint

PORTLAND, Ore. – You won't see any cows roaming around the Oregon Convention Center (OCC), but bovine do play a big part in helping the meeting facility improve its carbon footprint.

The OCC, the Pacific Northwest's largest convention facility, has selected to participate in the Smart Energy program from its natural gas supplier, NW Natural, to offset the natural gas usage at its building. With more than 1 million square feet of meeting and banquet space, the OCC is one of NW Natural's largest participating customers in the program.

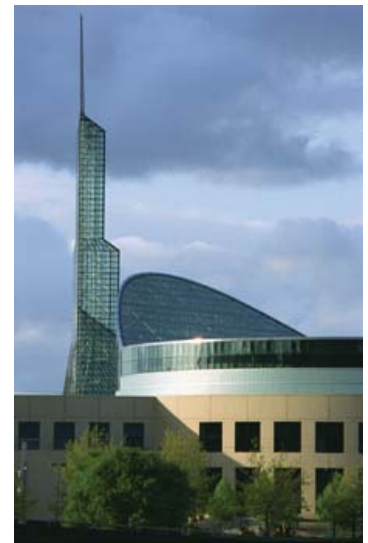
"We were looking for carbon offset opportunities," said Ryan Thorpe, OCC's director of operations. "Smart Energy is compelling and different. It's an integral part of our plan to move forward and keep pushing the envelope with our sustainable practices. We also liked the fact that it is local and through our natural gas provider. Most convention centers don't have that opportunity."

Smart Energy is designed to support projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These projects include a biodigester at a farm in Boardman, Ore., that captures methane gas from cow manure and keeps it out of the atmosphere, where it is a 21 times more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. The biodigester is expected to be up and running in March 2009 and the captured methane will be used on-site as a renewable energy source.

Paying a little extra each month to participate in Smart Energy is only part of the OCC's sustainable leadership plan. The center earned a LEED-EB rating in the Existing Building category in 2004, and in 2008 was the first convention center in the country to recertify at a higher LEED-EB silver rating. In addition, other green measures include providing sustainability stations where meeting-goers can easily recycle, serving locally-grown food, using bulk containers for condiments and composting food waste.

"The Oregon Convention Center's leadership holds the same values of caring for the community and environment as NW Natural," said NW Natural's Bill Edmonds, Director of Environmental Policy and Sustainability. "We're proud to be partnering with them in this innovative program."

Thanks to participants like the OCC, Smart Energy offset 14,000 tons of carbon dioxide in 2008 – the equivalent of 1.4 million gallons of gasoline.



The Oregon Convention Center in Portland has signed up to offset its carbon footprint through investing in biogas technology with its natural gas provider, NW Natural.

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About NW Natural's Smart Energy Program

NW Natural is headquartered in Portland, Ore., and serves about 655,000 residential and business customers in Oregon and Southwest Washington. It is the largest independent natural gas utility in the Pacific Northwest and is one of the fastest-growing local distribution companies in the nation.

NW Natural does not profit from funds raised through Smart Energy. The money will be used to fund greenhouse gas reduction projects, to educate customers about the program, and for the administration of the project through The Climate Trust, a leading non-profit organization and one of the largest institutional purchasers of offsets in the United States. The Climate Trust, which will manage the Smart Energy funds, supports innovative strategies to reduce, avoid or capture global warming emissions.

NW Natural is offsetting the carbon dioxide emissions created by the natural gas used to heat all its facilities for the next five years, totaling a reduction of 700 tons of carbon dioxide. NW Natural shareholders are also paying nearly a quarter of the program costs.

For more information about the Smart Energy program, visit nwnatural.com.

About Oregon Convention Center

The Oregon Convention Center is owned by Metro and operated by the Metropolitan Exposition Recreation Commission (MERC). MERC also manages the Portland Expo Center and Portland Center for the Performing Arts and serves as a catalyst for culture, community and economic development. Visit www.mercvenues.org or www.oregoncc.org for more information.

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