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From the Sacramento Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/blog/energy-inc/2015/05/rocklin-company-building-solar-wind-battery-micro.html>

Rocklin company building solar, wind, battery micro-grid for tribe

May 8, 2015, 12:51pm PDT

Rocklin's JLM Energy will build an electrical micro-grid that incorporates wind power, solar panels and batteries for a North Coast tribe.

A self-contained grid will be able to cut the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria's use of utility power during peak times at its community center, and perhaps most of the time. The \$400,000 system will be installed this summer.

If the center project works out, the tribe eventually could expand the project to power its casino, restaurant, businesses and homes in Loleta.



RENDERING COURTESY OF JLM ENERGY

Rocklin's JLM Energy will build an electrical micro-grid that incorporates wind power, solar panels and batteries for a community center for the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, a tribe in Humboldt County. This is a depiction of what the installation will look like.

The tribe's Tish Non Community Center is a two-story, 31,000 square foot building that is used for group meetings, child care, elder care and as a tribal restaurant. It also is rented out for weddings and meetings. The center was built with green roofs, day lighting, natural ventilation and hydronic floor heating.

The new system will include 100 kilowatts of solar photovoltaic, 20 wind turbines with a total of 30 kilowatts capacity and a 60 kilowatt battery storage system.

"This is the kind of system we are specialized in, where it is all integrated," JLM spokeswoman Pam Biery said.

For years, the tribe has operated a 10 kilowatt wind turbine to power its wastewater treatment plant.

Edwin Smith, a member of the tribal council and director of environment and natural resources for the Bear River band, said the tribe's experience with the single wind turbine has been good. "We know it works. The technology has improved for wind and solar and it is the right thing to do for the environment. It is a sound economic decision in the long run, but it is also a long term investment in our planet," Smith said in a news release.

The hybrid system is strictly for the community center, which is run by a separate management team than other tribal enterprises. But Smith said they would be interested in expanding the system. It's part of an effort by the tribe to diversify economically and become more self-sufficient, he said.

The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria is a tribe of Mattole, Bear River and Wiyot tribes. It has about 572 members and operates a casino, restaurant and other economic enterprises. With more than 400 employees, the tribe is one of the largest employers in Humboldt County.

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Sacramento Business Journal

