

SUCCESS STORY

Bishop Paiute Tribe Completes First Tribal SOMAH-Funded Solar Installation



Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing



PROPERTY INFO

**Coyote Mountain Apartments
owned by Bishop Paiute Tribe**

LOCATION

Bishop Paiute Reservation

YEAR BUILT

2013

UNITS

24

RESIDENT PROFILE

Family housing

PAID JOB TRAINEES

**One job trainee received
40 hours of paid job training**

INCENTIVE

\$114,457

ESTIMATED LIFETIME SAVINGS FOR

RESIDENTS

\$473,747

IOU TERRITORY

Southern California Edison

SYSTEM SIZE

System size: **49 kW DC**

Solar credit allocation:

82% tenant, 18% common area

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

**Reduces 40 tons of CO₂ emissions
per year/800 tons of CO₂
emissions over 20 years**

Background

What does it take to address the impacts climate change has on everyday energy use? This is a question communities across California are seeking answers to as they navigate rising utility costs and unpredictable weather conditions. The answers are not universal, although ideally they would incorporate leadership, innovation and adaptation.

An example of best practices can be found through the Bishop Paiute Tribe and its commitment to installing solar panels on tribal properties as a mechanism to support tribal members' access to affordable energy solutions and hands-on experience via job training opportunities in the growing solar industry.¹ These goals are a part of the Bishop Paiute Tribe's overarching [Strategic Energy Plan](#), aimed at achieving self-sufficiency and protecting the environment. While the bulk of these efforts were initially focused on single-family homes, they have expanded to add solar on multifamily housing. Through its long-standing partnership with [GRID Alternatives Inland Empire \(IE\) Office](#), the [Bishop Paiute Tribe](#) Environmental Management Office (EMO) enrolled its Coyote Mountain Apartments in the Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing Program ([SOMAH](#)) and completed California's first solar installation on a tribal reservation funded by SOMAH.

¹ [Bishop Paiute Tribe – 2017 Project | Department of Energy](#)

Why Choose Solar & How Does SOMAH Help?

"Energy affordability is a major issue for the community. Electrical rates are high, but we also have abundant sunshine, and the Tribe has several climate goals to do its part in helping to reduce global carbon emissions and to provide job training in the renewable energy field," said EMO Director Brian Adkins. Historically, adding solar has been more accessible to single-family homeowners or on new construction, however, programs such as SOMAH are helping to shift this through funding solar installations for renters, specifically those living in affordable housing and environmental justice communities.



"Single and multifamily renters usually have no opportunities to benefit from solar. The SOMAH Program brings funding solutions and job training opportunities for low-income/affordable housing projects. It offers developers and owners the assistance they need to develop solar projects while providing local workforce development opportunities."

*—Lisa Castilone,
GRID IE Community Development & Tribal Program Manager*



At its completion, Coyote Mountain Apartments added a 49-kW DC system to serve its 24 apartment homes. The installation was completed by [Highpoint Solar](#), a local subcontracting organization that frequently works with GRID IE and Bishop Paiute Tribe on solar installations that include job trainees from the tribe. "We have trainees that work with Highpoint Solar from the Bishop Paiute Tribe, many of those trainees have gone on to be Highpoint Solar employees and they've become very valuable team members within our company," said Highpoint Solar Chief Financial Officer Amy Smith.

For this project, the importance of training is demonstrated in the participation of a Bishop Paiute Tribe member, Marika Spratt. Spratt shared, "I trained at Owens Valley Career Development Center (a local job training organization). It was a great program. Then I got the call from Highpoint Solar and received hands-on training, which helped me feel very comfortable and prepared during the installation."

Looking Toward the Future

Over the life of the system, residents of Coyote Mountain Apartments are expected to save \$473,747 through solar energy credits (82% tenant/18% common area split) and a reduction of 40 tons of CO₂ emissions per year. The project was fully funded through incentives from the SOMAH Program, a Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund Sempra Foundation grant and an in-kind donation from the Bishop Paiute Tribe. As the first completed SOMAH-funded tribal project in California, it brought great excitement to program participants and the SOMAH Program Administration (PA) team.



It's exactly the kind of project Southern California Edison (SCE) says is "critical to accomplishing SCE's clean energy 'pathway' to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and help meet the state's ambitious climate and clean energy goals." SCE Government Relations Manager Matthew Paruolo added, "SCE remains committed to safely providing Tribal Nations with reliable, affordable, and clean energy – and congratulates the Bishop Paiute Tribe, its tribal members, and numerous partners, on the successful completion of this project to help decarbonize the grid and create a brighter future for all."

"The Tribe continuously looks for improvements that benefit our tribal members and the community. This project took a lot of planning and execution, and we hope other tribal communities can look to us as an inspiration and bring similar projects to their communities. We don't want to take the credit for this amazing achievement. That credit belongs to all of those involved from start to finish, who made this project come to fruition."

–Bishop Paiute Tribal Council

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in early August with tribal leadership and members, program participants, state government officials, SCE representatives and the SOMAH PA in attendance. The possibilities that adding rooftop solar can provide has generated a buzz especially on what can be paired with solar panels to increase energy affordability including battery storage. And while there was a great deal to celebrate, the event brought to light the outstanding opportunities to help other tribes access the SOMAH Program by connecting tribes from across the state to tribal leadership and program participants from Coyote Mountain and sharing the lessons learned from this project.



The **Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing** (SOMAH) Program provides financial incentives for installing photovoltaic solar energy systems on multifamily affordable housing. The program delivers clean power and credits on energy bills to affordable housing residents.

To find out how to bring solar to your community, visit CalSOMAH.org
858 244 1177 ext. 5 | contact@CalSOMAH.org