



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #0 – Dedication of Visitor Center Photovoltaic System, May 18, 2009

By Park Ranger Patrick Gamman

Greetings, once again, from Grand Canyon National Park. This Ranger Patrick Gamman here to share with you the exciting news that APS (Arizona Public Service) who provides 900,000 customers with electricity has donated and built solar panels for the Grand Canyon visitor center. On May 18th, 2009 the park and members of APS held a dedication ceremony. Here are some of the highlights, starting with Park Superintendent Steve Martin.

Superintendent Steve Martin:

...and as you can see we are right in the midst of quite a construction project. This building, which is passive solar, was built a few years ago and now we have this opportunity to go active solar. The construction that is going on... this visitor with the parking as part of our shuttle system is going to be a real center piece for the visitor here.

What we are looking at here at Grand Canyon is being a leader in the next generation of clean energy and sustainable practices. We have many things that we are doing as we step forward on that. Our shuttle bus system that many of you will get a chance to ride is an incredibly green system with millions of ridership's each year, which reduces our carbon footprint. They're green machines...

Over here we have our horse which is we like to say is one of our alternative fuel ranger vehicles that have been in use for many many years. We like to highlight that.

We want all of our public buildings to have an environmental message because we think not only do we need to walk our talk, but we need to teach that message as we look at these key issues of climate change and global warming and the need to reduce our energy consumption as we move into this next century. Don we would like you to come up and say a few words.

Don Robinson – President and Chief Operating Officer of APS

The project here at the Grand, though it's small, is highly visible because it is at the Grand Canyon. Probably the most spectacular place on Earth and it is symbolic of the commitment we have at APS to environmental protection, sustainability, and to make Arizona the solar capital of the world. We selected the Grand Canyon for this project because what could be better then a site like we have behind us? 4.5 million visitors will see this every year. 4.5 million visitors are going to see what solar power can do and they are going to be a part of the process. They can go inside and look at the exhibits. They are going to see the eighty-four solar panel on the property and around, that are creating enough energy to supply 30% of the Visitor Center's needs.

Bill Auberle is a professor of Civil and Environmental engineering at Northern Arizona University and he is one of our charter members of THE GREEN CHOICE CUSTOMERS. That means he has paid a little bit more each month to get a specific portion of his electricity from renewable energy resources. It is a commitment like this that has generated the enthusiasm and momentum for projects that make this possible and successful. If you would join me in welcoming Bill I would invite him up to say a few words.

Bill Auberle- Solar Partner (Northern Arizona University professor of Civil and Environmental engineering)

I am really here as a customer of Arizona Public Service (APS). It was really easy for me a decade ago when APS approached some people in Flagstaff and said; "Would you guys be interest in spending a few extra bucks to help us advance our commitment to solar energy"? It was very easy for me because my family said; "YES"! I had no choice in the matter; it was the kids who said we need to do this. So, I had the privilege of being one of the earliest participants in the Green Choice Program, the solar partners program that APS has. It was also very easy for me because I was born and raised and spent the first twenty odd years of my life in West Virginia. West Virginia is not known for solar energy it is known for another kind of energy. It is a coal state. It also used to be known as the "mountain state".

It still has that on its' license plate, but in reality the mountains, as most of you are aware, the mountains of West Virginia are disappearing. They are disappearing so that coal can be extracted from the place where I grew up. The mountains are now more like mesas in many parts of West Virginia. The valleys don't have streams in them, but tend to have the residue from coal combustion. So, when I think about a resource such as solar energy relative to the environmental impacts of solar energy vs. coal, from the time it is mined from ground until it is finally disposed of in the form of ash coming from its' combustion it is very easy for me to say; "We have to take advantage of the sun". I am really happy that APS has this commitment that they announced in Flagstaff last week and now at the Grand Canyon National Park. It is very easy for to spend a little bit more on my monthly electric bill to support this kind of endeavor. So, thanks to APS and thanks to the park.

Superintendent Steve Martin:

To talk a little bit about the visitor connection we have Judy Hellmich-Bryan.

Judy Hellmich-Bryan

About a year ago Don Keel, who is our local APS energy guy, approached me and said; "Hey Judy, what do you think about the park service taking a donation from APS of a solar system"? I said; "That sounds like a great idea, the visitor center is the perfect place to do it because we do get 4.5 million visitors to Grand Canyon National Park". Once all the construction, Steve mentioned, around here is over, probably 80-85% of those visitor are going to come into the Grand Canyon Visitor Center and the canyon view complex. They will see the photo-voltaic panels; they illustrate the park service commitment and our ongoing drive to have renewable energy in the national parks. If you go inside after the ceremony there is actually a monitor that is hooked up to the system and the inverter. It shows visitors how much energy is being produced by this system. It is an 18 kilowatt system. On an average sunny day like today we are producing 14 kilowatts, which is more then enough power than it takes to power most homes. It also shows how many gallons of fossil fuels have not been burned because of the photo-voltaic. It shows how many trees have been saved, how much totally energy has been produced. So, it is a great opportunity for visitors to come and see these panels and see in real time how much energy is being produced.

Superintendent Steve Martin:

Thank you all so much for coming today. We look forward to this great partnership continuing to flourish. Thank you so much.