

Like 34k

eEdition / Subscriber Services
Mobile | Mobile Alerts | RSS

NEWS PHOTOS BUSINESS TECH SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIVING OPINION PUBLICATIONS MY TOWN HELP

SEARCH



Site



Web Search by YAHOO!



S

today's DEALS

HOLIDAY
GIFT GUIDE

Raley's

In The News: De La Salle rolls | Marquez knocks out Pacquiao | UC gets new logo | PSY apologizes | Cal State Bernard

Recommend

Send

One person recommends this.
Sign Up to see what your
friends recommend.

Share

Tweet

0

Watsonville Coast Produce goes solar

New system powers massive coolers

By DONNA JONES - Santa Cruz Sentinel

Posted: 09/07/2012 05:37:12 PM PDT

Updated: 09/07/2012 05:49:30 PM PDT

WATSONVILLE - The sun's chilling the fruits and veggies at Watsonville Coast Produce these days.

The wholesale distributor has installed 2,400 solar panels to power its more than 60,000-square-foot Kearny Street office and warehouse, including 18,000 square feet dedicated to refrigerated coolers.

The conversion to solar power is just one of several steps the company has taken in the past several years to go green with the aim of boosting the bottom line and preserving the business and environment for future generations.

"I'm at the point where I have grandchildren and I have employees who have been with me a long time," said owner Gary Manfre. "It's good for the environment. It's good for the people down the road. It's good for everything as far as I can see."

The system went on line last month, and after a couple of tweaks, is running as expected, said partner Doug Petersen. Operationally, there's no difference in the running of the big compressor and 48 large fans that keep the coolers cool. Financially, the company's average monthly PG&E bill of \$12,000 to \$13,000 has zeroed out, he said.

Steve apHugh of San Francisco-based The Solar Co. said the 739-kilowatt system produces enough electricity to power 150 homes for a year.

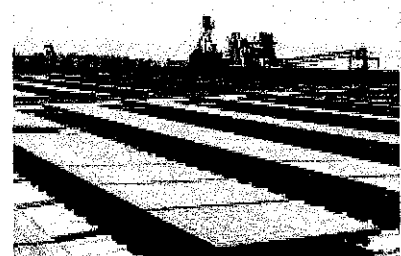
The system cost about \$3 million to purchase and install, but a federal tax credit cut the expense about 30 percent, apHugh said. The company also gets to take advantage of a tax rule that allows accelerated depreciation, as well as a PG&E rebate under the California Solar Initiative.

Santa Cruz County Bank provided financing for the project.

"There's never been a better time from an investment standpoint to get into solar," apHugh said.

Petersen said company leaders had explored solar before, but felt it was too costly. The numbers added up this time, he said. The system will be paid off in less than 10 years, he said, but estimates its life at more like 40 though the warranty for

Click photo to enlarge



Hundreds of solar panels sit atop the Watsonville Coast Produce... (KEVIN JOHNSON/SENTINEL)

1

2

3

»