

## Progress Continues on Community-scale Microgrid at Blue Lake Rancheria

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When ceremonial shovels hit the dirt last August, it signaled the start of construction of a \$6.3 million, renewable energy microgrid system at the Blue Lake Rancheria, a Native American reservation about 15 miles northeast of Eureka.



Real shovels have been at work since then, and progress continues on the project. Construction began recently on a 500 kilowatt solar array, which will become the largest in Humboldt County when completed this summer.

"Many aspects of the project are ahead of schedule, and all the partners have demonstrated exceptional commitment to deliver a showcase project to many stakeholders," said Jana Ganion, energy director for the Rancheria site.

The project is a collaboration between the Blue Lake Rancheria and the Schatz Energy Research Center at Humboldt State University. Funding includes a \$5 million grant from the California Energy Commission's [Electric Program Investment Charge program](#).

The Rancheria covers about 100 acres in a fairly isolated area subject to interruptions from the electrical grid. The microgrid, which can operate independent of the larger grid, will combine solar power, battery storage and advanced controls to provide reliable power for the reservation's day-to-day energy needs and during outages and contingencies; important since the Rancheria is a designated emergency evacuation center where county residents would go during a natural disaster. The reservation supports an American Red Cross-certified shelter and an emergency operations center.

The microgrid will also reduce fossil fuel use by up to 40 percent and increase demand response capabilities to ease pressure on the larger grid.

"This project shows the type of leadership and partnership that can advance California's climate and renewable energy goals, help transform our energy system and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Energy Commissioner Karen Douglas last year as she and other leaders dug their ceremonial shovels into the soil during the groundbreaking and pitched a scoopful of dirt.

The Blue Lake Rancheria is one of 16 communities selected as a 2015-2016 Climate Action Champion by the Obama Administration for exceptional work in response to climate change.