



*Case No. SWS-W-18-01*

*Order No. 34246*

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## **Commission accepting comments on Idaho Power request to suspend community solar project**

**BOISE (Feb. 26, 2019)** - State regulators are accepting written comments regarding Idaho Power's proposal to suspend its Community Solar Program.

The voluntary program allows Idaho Power customers to buy subscriptions for a portion of the output of a 500-kilowatt (kW) solar array located in southeast Boise.

The utility said its proposal, which requires approval from the Idaho Public Utilities Commission, is based on insufficient enrollment in the program despite "extensive marketing efforts."

At the program's peak, in June 2017, 239 customers had purchased subscriptions, which cost \$562.

That is far short of the program capacity of 1,093 residential customers and 470 non-residential customers.

As of Feb. 1, 2019, the number of subscribers had fallen to 148 or roughly 9.5 percent of capacity.

The utility requested a March 4 effective date for suspension of the program, but the Commission has suspended the proposed effective date in order to allow adequate opportunity for public input and to consider the request. The deadline to submit a written comment is March 28.

The Commission approved Idaho Power's Community Solar Program in 2016 as a pilot program, providing an option for customers unable to install their own rooftop solar panels while allowing the utility to gain insight about "what works and what does not, to inform future projects."

The Commission approved it after the parties to the case reached a settlement agreement that addressed concerns about the project's viability.

That agreement lowered the subscription fee from \$740 to \$562 and provided an option for subscribers to pay a monthly fee of \$26.31 spread out over 24 months rather than requiring a one-time, up-front payment as Idaho Power had initially proposed.

Each subscriber receives a bill credit for the generation output from a 320-watt panel from the previous month, throughout a 25-year subscription term. Residential subscribers receive a solar

energy credit of 3.0246 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh), with 638 kWh generated annually per subscription.

The power is generated at a 500-kW single-axis, tracking solar array that came online in 2017 at the southwest corner of Amity and Holcomb roads in Boise, with an estimated construction cost of \$1.2 million.

The program was designed to be funded primarily by subscribers, with a 15-percent subsidy from the company's shareholders and \$323,000 recoverable from ratepayers through the Power Cost Adjustment mechanism. The company has not earned a return on the project.

Idaho Power said it embarked on an extensive marketing campaign after the Commission approved the program. Those efforts included direct mail sent to approximately 36,000 customers, outreach with business customers, presentations to organizations and at community events and trade events, and program information included in bill inserts to residential customers.

Though the program fell short of expectations, Idaho Power said it has received "valuable feedback from stakeholders throughout the enrollment timeframe and is committed to working with stakeholders and customers to determine a community solar design that will be most successful in a future offering."

Go [here](#) to submit a comment electronically. Or go to the Commission's web site, [www.puc.idaho.gov](http://www.puc.idaho.gov), and click on the "Case Comment Form" under the "Electric" heading. Please include the case number, IPC-E-19-05. Comments can also be submitted via fax to (208) 334-3762 or by mail to P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0074.

All documents related to this case are available [here](#). Or go to the Commission's web site, [www.puc.idaho.gov](http://www.puc.idaho.gov), click on "Open Cases" under the "Electric" heading and scroll down to case number IPC-E-19-05.