

Permaculture Education Center in Rural California Will Save \$2 Million on Energy Bills with Solar + Battery Storage

Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC) recently installed a solar and storage microgrid, showcasing the importance of climate resilience for rural communities.

OCCIDENTAL, CA, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), in partnership with RE-volv and Vital Energy Solutions, recently installed a 124 kW solar and 540 kWh battery storage system at their 80-acre farm and demonstration site in Sonoma County, CA. With 270 solar panels, including some mounted on top of a carport equipped with EV chargers, OAEC's new microgrid system is uniquely designed to meet 100% of their current energy needs as well as some projected future load growth. Over the next 25 years, OAEC will save more than \$2 million on energy bills, enabling the organization to invest directly in its mission.



The OAEC facilities, including the retreat center and garden, powered by a solar and storage microgrid system.

As climate-related disasters become more frequent and energy prices continue to spike, with the potential for further volatility under recent changes to energy policy, OAEC is taking steps to secure a resilient future. With battery storage, the organization can disconnect from the grid and keep the lights on during wildfire risks and frequent rural power outages. This microgrid will power OAEC's property year-round, supporting environmental changemakers, hosting group retreats, and advancing initiatives that restore biological and cultural diversity.

"Solar power is a good answer to a bunch of questions – how we can create our own electricity, build community resilience, and lower our carbon footprint," said Dave Henson, Executive Director of OAEC.

Local installer Vital Energy Solutions, that's been serving the North Bay since 1971, led the design, engineering, procurement, and construction of the cutting-edge microgrid system with support from the OAEC construction crew. The project was partially financed through RE-volv, a nonprofit that helps fellow nonprofits nationwide go solar by providing access to clean energy financing. RE-volv was able to finance this project with investment support from The Schmidt Family Foundation, the Kresge Foundation and Candide's Afterglow Climate Justice Fund, along with grant support from OTTWAY.

"When a legendary sustainability education organization like OAEC builds a project like this, the ripple effect is tremendous," said Andreas Karelis, Executive Director of RE-volv. "Thousands of visitors that come to learn about permaculture and sustainable design here, will hopefully be inspired to replicate these concepts and build resilience through solar and storage microgrids back in their communities."

Through this solar and battery storage system, OAEC lives their mission to grow regional-scale community climate resilience. Their dedication to sustainable energy solutions is an example of what is possible when rural organizations access reliable, clean and affordable power.

About Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC)

The Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC) is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization based in Sonoma County, California, dedicated to protecting ecological and cultural diversity. Founded in 1994, OAEC operates on an 80-acre organic farm and educational center. OAEC hosts retreats as well as offers training, workshops, and consulting services in permaculture and community-based resilience planning. Through its hands-on programs and partnerships, OAEC empowers individuals, organizations, and communities to create just and sustainable relationships with the land, each other, and future generations. Learn more at www.oaec.org.



The solar array mounted on the roof of a carport equipped with EV chargers.



The battery storage system was lifted by a crane into position on the farm.

About Vital Energy

Vital Energy has been providing solar and backup power solutions since 1971, helping communities reach their energy independence. Vital Energy has installed and partnered on over 100 megawatts of clean energy projects for residential, commercial, agricultural, municipal and utility scale customers throughout Northern California. For more information, visit:

<https://vitalenergysolar.com>.

About RE-volv

RE-volv is a clean energy access nonprofit with a mission to advance sustainable economic development in underinvested communities by facilitating, financing, and raising awareness of equitable clean energy and climate resilience solutions. To date, RE-volv has developed and financed over 100 nonprofit solar projects in 18 states, collectively saving them \$35+ million on their electricity bills, allowing them to better serve their 200,000 beneficiaries. The 5 MW of solar RE-volv installed to date will avoid over 100,000 tons of CO₂ emissions over the life of the systems. Learn more at re-volv.org.

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