

MERCED SUN-STAR

Pilot program could lower home energy costs in these low-income Valley communities

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Residents of several lower income San Joaquin Valley communities will be receiving millions of dollars to upgrade their appliances and fix utility lines to lower energy costs.

The California Public Utilities Commission on Thursday voted to approve 11 pilot projects that will invest about \$56 million to replace commonplace and expensive propane and wood burning devices so residents can stay warm, cook and receive hot water, according to a news release.

The projects could end up saving residents up to \$150 per month on energy bills, the release states.



The California Public Utilities Commission voted to approve 11 pilot projects, \$56 million in disadvantaged San Joaquin Valley communities to replace commonplace and expensive propane and wood burning devices.

The local communities receiving the projects are Le Grand, Cantua Creek and Lanare in Fresno County, La Vina and Fairmead in Madera County, along with the communities of Allensworth, Alpaugh, California City, Ducor, Seville and West Goshen, according to the release.

Le Grand will receive the most funds of the 11 communities with about \$13 million. Fairmead will receive almost \$7 million, \$3 million for Cantua Creek, \$2.5 million for La Vina and more than \$600,000 for Lanare, the release states.

“Some of the poorest communities in the state are forced to pay the highest energy cost, in addition, many are facing other challenges like contaminated drinking water and bad air quality,” states Abigail Solis with Self Help Enterprises. Solis said the pilot communities will help determine what strategies work and can be replicated with other San Joaquin Valley cities and communities.

Project development is expected to start immediately, the release states.