

PG&E CURRENTS

Breaking Down Barriers and Improving Access: PG&E Pilot Generates More Affordable Energy Options and Support for Disadvantaged Communities in the Central Valley

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By: Staff

SEVILLE, CA – It is no secret that clean energy generates healthier, more sustainable communities. But not all customers have access to green power and its benefits. That's why PG&E launched a pilot program in 2020 to increase access to clean, affordable energy. Specifically, the program aimed to replace propane and wood fueled appliances in disadvantaged communities.

The San Joaquin Valley Disadvantaged Communities (SJV DAC) Pilot recently completed its first two residential electrification projects in the small farming community of Seville in the Central Valley.

These projects included the replacement of propane appliances with energy efficient electric appliances, as well as several other services and benefits to help lower local energy bills. Self-Help Enterprises partnered with PG&E on the SJV Pilot and is responsible for community outreach and enrollments. Based in the San Joaquin Valley, the community development organization supports low-income families in building and sustaining healthy homes.

“The SJV DAC Pilot Project is life changing for residents who have waited decades for affordable energy options. Completion of the first two homes is an exciting milestone for the hundreds of families that will benefit from the project and a significant step towards providing clean energy access to disadvantaged communities,” said Abigail Solis, Self-Help Enterprises.

PG&E is currently administering the SJV DAC pilot in three communities in the San Joaquin Valley: Allensworth, Cantua Creek, and Seville. These rural communities have an average



population of 100 households and an average household income of less than \$30,000 per year. They are traditionally overlooked and underserved.

Residents in these communities are currently using propane and wood fuel for appliances such as their space heater, water heater, cooking appliance and clothes dryer. Through the pilot, customers can receive energy-efficient electric appliances such as a heat pump space heater, heat pump water heater, electric range or cooktop, and an Energy Star-qualified clothes dryer.

All upgrades are provided to the customer at no cost. Though replacing propane and wood-fueled appliances with electric appliances may increase electric energy costs, participants are expected to experience an overall decrease in total energy costs due to the reduction in propane and wood fuel. To help ensure participants experience an overall energy cost reduction, the pilot also provides a 10-20% discount on participants bills. Following the completion of the pilot, PG&E will measure post-participation bill impacts to determine the degree to which the pilot was able to successfully reduce overall energy costs.

“The SJV DAC pilot is the first residential electrification project on this scale for PG&E,” says Moses Gastelum, PG&E Program Manager for the SJV DAC Pilot. “Not only does it have the potential to truly help some of California’s most vulnerable residents, it will also provide vital learnings that are key to PG&E’s future efforts to serve disadvantaged communities and support California’s decarbonization goals.”

PG&E specifically targeted communities in the pilot that are often overlooked. Allensworth, for example, located off Highway 99 between Visalia and Bakersfield, was founded by Colonel Allen Allensworth and four other settlers in 1908 as a town fully financed and governed by African Americans. Colonel Allensworth was born into slavery in Louisville, Kentucky in 1842. After the Civil War started and Union forces neared Louisville, he joined the Navy. He later became a Baptist minister and then a chaplain of the 24th Infantry. After seeing many African Americans move west to escape discrimination, Colonel Allensworth and four other like-minded visionaries decided to establish a place where African Americans could live and thrive without oppression.

Though the town of Allensworth initially thrived, the town deteriorated and shrank over the past century until recent efforts by the State of California to commemorate the its historical significance. The town has been to preserved and restored.

PG&E expects to enroll more than 150 households in the pilot by its completion, which is anticipated by next summer.