

Making Energy Efficiency Pay Off

Two national wildlife refuges— San Andres Refuge in New Mexico and Ottawa Refuge in Ohio – have received national awards for innovations in energy efficiency.

San Andres Refuge, cited for its innovative renewable energy program by the Departments of the Interior and Energy, installed a solar-wind energy system that meets about 80 percent of the energy demands of the headquarters facility. San Andres Refuge was spending about \$3,000 a year on energy for its small headquarters. Refuge manager Kevin Cobble worked with El Paso Electric, which installed a meter that runs backwards when the refuge produces more power than it consumes. A refuge staff member and a volunteer installed solar panels and an electrician applied the finishing touches.

Cobble says the 30-foot-tall wind generator also attracts a lot of local visitors. The refuge is enclosed within the White Sands Missile Range and so is closed to the public, but the headquarters is located about 15 miles outside the refuge boundary.

In Ohio, Ottawa Refuge continued the refuge legacy of “green building” awards with a Sustainable Design prize from the Department of Energy for its 13,000-square-foot visitor center. The new center has cut energy usage in half as compared to its 1940s-era predecessor. The building includes high-efficiency lighting controlled by motion and daylight sensors, radiant floor heating, point-of-use hot water heaters, tinted windows, “super” insulation, a reflective metal roof, natural linoleum flooring, carpeting with a high content of recycled materials, and rainwater gardens and holding ponds.