

Fossil fuel meets renewables: Vermont gas station goes solar

December 13 2016, by Dave Gram

The Pump & Pantry looked unremarkable—a gas station, grocery and deli along the main road through the rural Vermont town of Williamstown.

But now the independent business is a meeting place of fossil fuels and renewable energy. It's a gas station that's gone solar.

Owner Sam Adams—not to be confused with the beer he sells—says he expects the \$100,000 investment he's made in a 200-panel, 70-kilowatt installation will have a payback period of about six years.

After that, he expects the panels installed by the Vermont-based solar company SunCommon will bring big savings on an electric bill to run his refrigerators that's been running \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month.

"People probably think it's odd for a gas station to claim to be environmentally friendly," Adams said. "We went solar because we have a duty to do what we can to be responsible stewards of the environment. Gasoline is a necessity of life here in rural Vermont; we accept that. But it doesn't mean we can't do what we can to be more energy and fuel-efficient."

Adams said he began considering solar panels about three years ago. A combination of falling prices for the panels and state and federal tax credits "made now the right time," he said.

"I'm willing to go green, but I've got to save some green in the process," Adams said. Going solar is an act of environmentalism "that's good for my bottom line."

He said he's also hoping it will be a draw for customers, particularly those interested in environmental issues like fighting climate change.

"People have noticed the array and commented that it's a good thing to do," he said. "We're proud of that. Maybe our solar array will encourage folks to stop in and shop with us."

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