Solar Energy

Solar radiation in the form of sunlight can be utilized for energy production in two ways. Active solar systems involve the use of mechanical devices to convert solar energy to heat or electricity. Passive solar systems utilize natural heating and cooling from the sun through building orientation and building design techniques.

Policies:

OS 11.1 Enforce the state Solar Shade Control Act, which promotes all feasible means of energy conservation and all feasible uses of alternative energy supply sources. (AI 62, 65, 66, 70)

OS 11.2 Support and encourage voluntary efforts to provide active and passive solar access opportunities in new developments. (AI 63, 64)

OS 11.3 Permit and encourage the use of passive solar devices and other state-of-the-art energy resources. (AI 62, 63, 64)

Geothermal Resources

Geothermal resources can be used for electricity production as geothermal steam can be used to run turbines. The exploitation of these resources, however, is frequently accompanied by detrimental impacts on the environment. Among these are the emission of toxic gases and chemical substances that result in the degradation of air quality, the threat of water pollution, damage to living organisms, and hazards to public health. Additional problems arise from the heavily industrial character of geothermal operations for electrical generation; the frequent occurrence of exceptional natural, scenic, and archaeological values in geothermal resource areas; and the adverse effects that geothermal fluid removal may have on nearby hot springs and other natural thermal features. Currently there is no active geothermal energy production in the County, though geothermal resources are known to exist in the County.

"Geothermal resources" mean the natural heat of the earth, the energy, in whatever form, below the surface of the earth present in, resulting from, or created by, or that may be extracted from, such natural heat, and all minerals in solution or other products obtained from naturally heated fluids, brines, associated gases, and steam, in whatever form, found below the surface of the earth, but excluding oil, hydrocarbon gas or other hydrocarbon substances.

Policies:

OS 12.1 Allow for the development of non-electrical, direct heat uses of geothermal heat and fluids for space, agricultural, and industrial heating in situations and localities where naturally occurring hydrothermal features will not be degraded. (AI 71)

The following policies direct the use of present technologies and the extraction and conversion of energy from geothermal fluid and steam reservoirs:

OS 12.2 Base all geothermal decisions on appropriate data relating to anticipated environmental, cultural, aesthetic, archaeological and social impacts.

OS 12.3 Weigh the benefits of geothermal as a viable energy source against the protection of hot springs, geysers, thermal pools, and other thermal features for their ecological, educational, and recreational values.