



Farm Managers Avoid Surcharges and Offset Energy Expenses with Agriculture Energy Rewards & Opportunities (AERO)

AT A GLANCE

Organization

West Hills Farm Services

Pump Partner

Westside Pump

Crops

Pistachios & Almonds

Service Points

2 wells - 250 hp pumps

Equipment

- Remote Control Device
- Soil Moisture Meter
- Pressure Sensor

Installed Equipment Value

\$43,050

Average Annual Cash Incentive

\$9,500*

Total Program Value

\$52,550

Challenge

Over his 25 years in farming, Brad Gleason has learned that success comes from optimizing efficiency and minimizing costs.

Gleason and his business partner, Gregorio Jacobo, manage about 7,000 acres of pistachio and almond orchards through their company, West Hills Farm Services.

For them, the old adage is wrong: money does grow on trees. So they carefully monitor the productivity of the trees and closely manage expenses. While Gleason and Jacobo continually make improvements to optimize yields, farming expenses continue to mount at an unnerving rate.

"Success in agriculture these days is a matter of containing and reducing costs," says Gleason. "Productivity gains are incremental, and rising expenses are always a threat. So we're constantly looking for ways to get more efficient. Technology advances can make a big difference."

Electricity costs continue to be an increasing operational cost for growers. Utility rate increases have averaged 3% or more annually for the past 5 years, adding to the imperative to control energy expense.

Solution

Gleason has two 250-horsepower irrigation pumps enrolled in the incentive program. He says the enrollment process was "painless and the paperwork was simple and easy to understand."



Brad Gleason says that each time West Hills Farm Services has participated in critical demand events: “Like clockwork, the pumps turn off and we start earning incentive dollars.”

Within the incentive program, Brad is notified of critical peak demand events – about 5-10 per year – and has the option to participate or opt out.

So far, West Hills Farms Services has participated in all events. Brad simply logs onto a secure website to opt into an event, which ranges from two to four hours in duration. The network operations center then sends a shutdown signal to Gleason’s pumps over the wireless network.

“Like clockwork, the pumps turn off and we start earning incentive dollars,” he explains. “The system gives you a choice whether to restart the pumps remotely or do it manually.

“We chose manual operation. So after each event is over, I receive both a voice message and an e-mail notification. We restart the pumps and resume our watering schedule.”

Gleason says he is especially pleased with “the added value in the soil moisture monitoring and going online to see how the wells are running.”

With investments of \$400,000 to \$900,000 per deep well, he emphasized the importance of using the monitoring equipment to assess pump efficiencies and being able to anticipate any needed repairs before a well goes down with a problem.

Best of all, Gleason says he’s reassured that his two large wells are sheltered from any peak surcharges.

Summary of Benefits

Agriculture Energy Rewards & Opportunities (AERO) is a free program that pays cash incentives for reducing energy usage during critical peak demand periods.

For qualified Ag customers, the program also provides thousands of dollars in Web-to-wireless monitoring and control equipment at no cost.

This equipment gives year-round visibility to critical information, such as pump on/off status, pump efficiency, soil moisture, temperature, and other data.

In addition, enrollment in the AERO program protects PG&E customers from peak surcharges.



With free monitoring and control equipment, Gregorio gets an additional source of valuable information about the health of their orchards.

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* Approximate cash value based upon full participation in PG&E demand response events, June-September, 2010. © Copyright 2015 Polaris Energy Services. All rights reserved. The Polaris logo, AERO logo, and AERO are trademarks and/or service marks of Polaris Energy Services. All other company and/or product names referenced herein may be trademarks and are the property of their respective owners.

