OREGON DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

NEWS RELEASE

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Pine Eagle students benefit from new lighting

SALEM—Pine Eagle School District is one of Oregon's smallest school districts. Located in Halfway, 52 miles from Baker City near the Idaho border, the district draws from Halfway, Richland and Oxbow.

Despite being a "regional" school, enrollment is declining and is now down to 160 students. Within the last five years, the district has consolidated three buildings down to one, according to Shawn Thatcher, maintenance supervisor.

With the declining student population, Thatcher knew that his recommendation to replace lighting fixtures "wouldn't be anywhere on the radar screen" of the school district budget. But there were definite needs.

The K-12 school building opened in 1968 with four-bulb T-12 tubes and magnetic ballasts that were replaced in 1995 with more efficient T-8s and electronic ballasts. However, due to the extreme heat the fixtures were subject to in their first 20 years of service, the wiring in the fixtures was degraded and there were frequent failures even after the '95 retrofit. Additionally, the four-bulb fixtures produced more light than was needed.

When the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) announced an opportunity for schools to apply for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus) funds for lighting projects in February 2010, Thatcher was quick to respond. The lighting needed to be replaced to ensure better quality light, reduce maintenance work, reduce electrical use and ensure safety.

ODOE awarded the school district with $86,693 in stimulus funds through the State Energy Program to replace 361 four-bulb fixtures with three-bulb fixtures and new wiring. Additionally, Idaho Power Company, Pine Eagle's electrical utility, provided nearly $4,000 in a financial incentive for the project. Baker Electric Service, Inc. in Baker City won the bid for the work.

"It was good for the Baker County economy that a Baker City company won the bid," said

Thatcher. “They did a great job!”

The hallway lighting work was completed first in June 2010 prior to the end of the school year. Thatcher said the contrast between the new hallway lighting and old classroom lighting was very noticeable to students and staff.

“We used lamps with a broader spectrum of light,” Thatcher said. “It was a stark contrast to the old lamps. The hallways are so much nicer.”

The bid for the lighting project came in under the award amount. The entire project cost $54,265, according to Thatcher, leaving more than $32,000 of the original award. Sub-recipients can only use the stimulus funds for work specified in their contract scope of work. The work was done without using the full award. ODOE will award the remaining funds for other projects that fall within the State Energy Program guidelines.

“We are very pleased to have the opportunity to get new lights,” Thatcher said. He’s hoping more funds become available as he was unable to include replacement lights for the school gymnasium in his original application.

In the meantime, the school district expects the new lights will reduce its lighting electrical use by approximately 25 percent. This should save the school district $1,370 per year, which can go towards educational purposes.

For a small Oregon school district, that is good news.

A list of all Oregon counties that received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds and amounts awarded is available at www.oregon.gov/ENERGY/Recovery/Funding.shtml#State_Energy_Program_and_Block_Grant_Awards_by_County

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