

State of New Mexico  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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## News Release

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## **Solar Photovoltaic System Keeps Water Running for Firefighters** *Fighting the Little Bear Fire near Alto, N.M.*

RUIDOSO, N.M. – A solar photovoltaic system installed by the Sun Valley Water and Sanitation District kept the water pumping to volunteer fire fighters fighting the Little Bear Fire when all other power in the area was lost.

“This is a great demonstration of how solar energy can benefit rural communities in an emergency,” said Louise Martinez, Division Director for the Energy, Conservation and Management Division. “Solar energy also provides great energy electric utility savings.”

Thanks to a grant from the Energy, Conservation and Management Division, the Sun Valley Water and Sanitation District in Alto, N.M. installed the system this past Spring of 2012. It is an 11-kW grid-interconnected, single-axis tracking, and pole-mounted solar photovoltaic system to generate electricity used by the community water system, a few miles north of Ruidoso. The system cost \$75,000.

The State Energy Program provided the grant to Sun Valley Water and Sanitation District using remaining American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, to demonstrate that a rural water coop could benefit from the use of solar to offset pumping expense. It is the first rural water coop in New Mexico, if not the nation, to incorporate solar.

The power provided by the system has enabled the Sun Valley Water and Sanitation District to obtain all the electricity it needs for pumping water in the hilly service territory.

When the Little Bear Fire spread, several communities and neighborhoods in the path of the fire and surrounding areas were ordered to leave. The area has been continuously suffering from power outages and many power surges.

Alto, N.M. is an unincorporated community in Lincoln County, New Mexico, United States. It is located in the Lincoln National Forest, five miles north of the village of Ruidoso, New Mexico. Alto is located at 7,300 feet.

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*Photos of the: 11-kW grid-interconnected, single-axis tracking, and pole-mounted solar photovoltaic system to generate electricity used by the Sun Valley Water and Sanitation District in Alto, N.M.*

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*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

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