

Camp Ramah in California's Innovative Solar Energy Project



Camp Ramah in California has embarked on a major solar energy project, making it a leader amongst Jewish institutions for its environmental consciousness. The first such project for a Jewish overnight camp on the West Coast, it is estimated to lower energy costs for Ramah by \$75,000 annually, and to reduce toxic emissions by approximately 15 million pounds of carbon dioxide, 37,800 pounds of nitrous oxide and 121,000

pounds of sulfur dioxide. [Click here](#) and scroll down to Solar Electric Systems for a real-time look at what the new system is producing!

This first phase of the project was made possible by a \$500,000 gift from alumnus David Braun. Camp Ramah expects reliance on solar power to insulate tuition against future energy cost spikes, thus keeping camp affordable for more families.

According to Camp Ramah in California's Executive Director Rabbi Daniel Greyber, "by both using and educating about solar energy during future encampments, we believe we will create generations of Jewish leaders who are environmentally conscious and who will seek to move more and more Jewish and non-Jewish institutions to environmentally friendly energy options."

In addition to their environmental and educational benefits, solar energy gifts could serve as an appealing alternative to traditional endowments for non-profit organizations. Rabbi Greyber has been working with Congressman Howard Berman, D., CA., to obtain IRS approval of a strategy to offer non-profits the same tax incentives currently given to for-profit companies to build solar installations. Such a change in the current tax code would make solar energy gifts go much further, allowing them to serve as a possible higher (10 percent to 15 percent) yield alternative to traditional 5 percent yield endowments, when taking into account the vast reduction in energy costs provided by solar installations.

According to Rabbi Greyber, this approach would vastly benefit the 135,000 non-profit organizations throughout California, including schools, churches, hospitals and universities. "California non-profits alone represent a large potential market for solar energy installations, which would reduce oil dependence and lower operating costs for some of our most important and needy institutions," Greyber remarked.