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Study: Conservation would benefit Nevada

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A nonprofit group from Boulder, Colo., announced a \$250,000 study that showed Nevada could reduce energy consumption by 31 percent by 2020 by implementing a series of conservation measures.

The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project estimated that it would cost 2 cents to save a kilowatt hour, compared with 7 or 8 cents to buy a kilowatt hour. The cost reduction stems from a need for fewer transmission line and power plant projects, said Howard Geller, director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project.

Conservation, as opposed to building new power plants, would save consumers and businesses in Nevada \$4.1 billion between 2003 and 2020, he said.

Also, Nevada would benefit from less air pollution and consume 8.5 billion gallons of water, Geller said. "We can't afford to waste energy and water any more," he said.

"You can get half of the savings that we're calling for from utility programs," Geller said.

He called for utility energy efficiency programs and suggested utilities, such as Nevada Power Co., be allowed to earn higher than normal profits on the economic benefits of the energy conservation program.

Geller also suggested Nevada upgrade its building codes so new houses are more energy efficient and prohibit the sale of energy inefficient appliances. He commended home builders for recent improvements in energy conservation standards.

He called for utility rebates to customers who use energy efficient appliances, air conditioners and other appliances. He also favored letting utilities spend funds on energy efficiency marketing, training and education.

The study, Geller said, wasn't funded or endorsed by Nevada Power, but he made his announcement at the utility's headquarters in Las Vegas.

He also commended Nevada Power and Sierra Pacific Power Co. of Reno for winning regulatory approval for a \$11 million conservation program next year. Geller said he helped the utilities devise the program.

Geller said he would like to see the utilities spend \$35 million to \$40 million on energy conservation programs by 2005, but he was not critical about the smaller amount budgeted for next year.

"It's a good start," Geller said.

His organization conducted a study on the benefits of energy conservation in six Western states: Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. The study showed that an aggressive program such as the one he outlined could yield 28 to 47 percent electricity savings for the region by 2020.

In rapidly growing Nevada, the energy efficiency program would reduce electric power growth to 0.9 percent a year from 2.6 percent between now and 2020, the study suggested.