

## LAS VEGAS SUN

Las Vegas, NV: November 21, 2002

### Study says state can lower energy use

By Timothy Pratt

[<timothy@lasvegassun.com>](mailto:timothy@lasvegassun.com)

LAS VEGAS SUN

A study released Wednesday said Nevada could greatly lower electricity use in the next two decades, saving water and benefiting the economy and the environment in the process.

The study says the state could use 31 percent less electricity by 2020, in the process saving 8.5 billion gallons of water per year, saving consumers and businesses \$4.1 billion and reducing gases that contribute to global warming by 30 percent.

About half of the drop in electricity use hinges on the utility's promotion of energy conservation by the utility, an approach that has been successful in other states, said the study's editor, Howard Geller, director of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project.

The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, or SWEEP, a Colorado-based nonprofit, conducted the study during the last year, and the Energy Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Energy Department and the Environmental Protection Agency paid for the study.

The findings are based on widespread adoption of cost-effective, commercially available measures to save energy in homes and businesses statewide. The study calls for homeowners to use more efficient appliances and for contractors to build more homes that meet the standards of a federal program called Energy Star.

Projected savings in water use were based on more efficient appliances such as dishwashers and building up to six fewer power plants during the next two decades. Fewer power plants would also mean less emissions.

As for the economic benefits, Geller said potential job losses from not building coal and gas plants would be offset by gains linked to a new sector of the economy based on energy efficiency.

"It's going to take a lot of work from a lot of people ... but it's reachable," said Bob Balzar, director of energy efficiency and conservation for Nevada Power Co.

"Utilities have to become far more proactive in encouraging conservation," said Peggy Maze Johnson, executive director of Citizen Alert, a Las Vegas-based nonprofit. "I have seen this work in other states, like Washington, where the utility offered rebates for upgrading houses to use more energy-efficient windows."

Nevada regulations allow for increased returns on investment by utilities in conservation programs, and the company is set to launch an \$11.2 million program for promoting conservation through energy efficiency statewide beginning in January.

The funding for the program pales in comparison to some others, however. In California, the Pacific Northwest, New York, Minnesota and Wisconsin, utilities invest 2 percent of their revenues in energy conservation programs, Geller said. If Nevada Power used the same formula, that would translate into a \$35 million to \$40 million program, he said.

"Still, you gotta walk before you can run, and going from almost nothing to \$11 million is something," he said.