

## **Flathead Electric to purchase renewable energy**

The Associated Press

Flathead Electric Cooperative plans to buy electricity from a biomass facility at a lumber company's plant in Columbia Falls as part of its effort to use local sources of renewable energy.

The cooperative's board of trustees on Wednesday announced it had approved the agreement with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company.

"Our board would prefer to do local (energy) generation as opposed to doing generation from out of state," FEC Assistant General Manager Mark Johnson told the Flathead Beacon (<http://bit.ly/yk0rfl>). "This is a great project and I'm looking forward to watching this come to fruition."

The cooperative has agreed to purchase for 20 years starting in 2013 an annual average of up to 2.5 megawatts of power, about enough to power 2,500 homes annually.

The company will pay a wholesale rate of 9 cents per kilowatt and receive renewable energy credits.

Stoltze officials said the agreement allows them to go forward with the \$20 million project to replace an old boiler and build a new biomass-fueled electric generation facility this spring. He said ground will be broken in April and energy will be produced by the fall of 2013.

"It's a good thing for the community, it's a good thing for Stoltze and our employees and it's a good thing for Flathead Electric," said Stoltze General Manager Chuck Roady. "This is just a very positive project."

He said the biomass plant will use wood waste such as bark and slash. The plant will likely add six new jobs to the company, Roady said.

The cooperative, celebrating its 75th anniversary, is the largest cooperative in the state and the second largest utility.

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Information from: Flathead Beacon, <http://www.flatheadbeacon.com>

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