

WEDNESDAY  
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# County receives \$175,000 in fed aid *Money aimed at green projects*

Sullivan County received \$175,000 in federal stimulus funds to focus on improving energy efficiency, and the result could be a much greener county complex in Unity.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant will fund the installation of a solar hot water system at the county jail in Unity, Sullivan County Manager Greg Chanis said. Solar panels on the jail would heat water to a certain point and then it would be stored in tanks, after which the existing oil-fired boiler would heat the water further for use, Chanis said. The boiler would run less often, saving on energy costs for the county.

"This pre-heating will significantly reduce the energy necessary to heat the water to the

See COUNTY - Page A2

## COUNTY FROM PAGE A1

target temperature of the various uses," Chanis wrote in the funding application.

Initially, county officials estimated that a system with 14 solar panels would cost about \$102,000, but bids for the project came in lower. Chanis said a larger system would further reduce energy usage.

"I, frankly, don't know what size system we're going to put in, because we're waiting for a revised estimate for a larger system," he said Tuesday.

The federal energy conservation grant is also funding a study that is exploring the feasibility of replacing the oil-fired steam plant at the Sullivan County Health Care nursing home in Unity with a wood chip-fired steam plant that would heat the facility and generate electrical power, Chanis said.

By moving the county's laundry facilities from the nursing home to the new Sullivan County Community Corrections building, which is scheduled to open in July, the

county will alleviate the need for high-pressure steam generation at the nursing home. That would make the proposed wood chip-fired boiler facility at the nursing home a possibility, Chanis said.

The combined heat and power biomass steam plant would generate electrical power using an on-site turbine. It wouldn't be enough electricity to provide all the power the nursing home uses, Chanis said, but it could be sold back to the public electrical grid and help to reduce county costs. Chanis said he envisions using inmate labor to harvest logs on county-owned land and turning them into wood chips, to supplement the fuel for the new boiler.

Bonhag Associates of Lebanon is compiling the feasibility study, which should be complete in a couple of months, Chanis said. If the study determines the project is feasible, there's a slim possibility that state funding, through the federal stimulus bill, could be available to help pay for part of

the construction of the wood chip boiler project, Chanis said. For the project to qualify for that funding, however, all other funding sources would need to be in place and contracts would have to be signed by December 2010.

The federal block grant Sullivan County received will also fund an energy audit for the county-owned UNH Cooperative Extension building in Newport and the replacement of outdated light fixtures at the nursing home in Unity.

Through the same federal energy program, the State of New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning received a direct allocation of about \$9.6 million. All 10 counties and the state's 10 most populous municipalities also received direct allocations. Direct allocations for federal stimulus funds were based on population, and Sullivan County received the second-smallest county energy grant, behind Coos County, which received \$138,000.