



Stacey and Mark Schmid, owners of Range Solar and Wind in Casper, Wyoming.

## **Stacey and Mark Schmid - Casper, Wyoming (December, 2017)**

For businesses, since more people are at work during the day, businesses use the most energy during daylight hours, which are sun hours! Adding solar to the grid during these times helps offset power needed from traditional utilities. Most consumers in Wyoming do not see a demand charge - but the ones that do can greatly benefit from solar. It can lessen the amp load that creates those demand charges. This can be done without using batteries. We have a customer in Casper that no longer gets demand charges because of the solar he installed.

There are actually a lot of incentives for solar in Wyoming. We are pleased to have Blue Sky and Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) installs that we have worked on out there. There's a job we did in Powell on an organic ranch that was a REAP grant recipient.

The federal tax credit is also worth 30% of an entire solar install, including labor. This amount comes off of taxes you owe - so there is no refund on this. Unfortunately, this is only in place until 2019. After 2019, people can still get solar tax credits for a while, but the percent will go down over time and then go away in a few years.

REAP Grant recipients can get up to 25% of an install covered. Program applications are taken twice a year in the fall and spring. The process requires paperwork from owner and installer. The USDA has been a delight to work with here in Wyoming!!!!

The Rocky Mountain Power Blue Sky Program takes applications twice a year as well - dates vary. Guidelines can be found online easily as there are a few too many to mention briefly.

Still, there's work to be done. Creative Energies will be in agreement with us that the state limit of 25 kW per meter is limiting. The example of a business in Casper that can't install enough solar to eliminate their bill shows this. They do have two meters - so we work around it as best as possible. In this case, we can install up to a 50 kW system. For many businesses, though, it's a problem. There are also no state incentives, which is another barrier. Also, for now, no local banks we have talked to are willing to finance solar.

Community solar projects would be great to get the ball rolling in Wyoming. Solar doesn't always make sense and is not efficient on all properties. Community solar could help in some of those situations, but we need legislation to make it possible.

The price of installation has gotten smaller over the years - although climbing again currently due to the recently added tariff. Labor is not cheaper - but many of the components of a solar system cost much less than they used to. For example, our panels were 170 watt and cost \$620 retail seven years ago. Now 280 watt panels retail at \$290.

Some installers charge less - but you have to watch out for the cheap companies that come in with products from bankrupt companies, install, and leave. People are left asking, "Where are my solar installers? What do I do?" Thankfully this has only just started in Wyoming. What a great state we live in! This has not yet been too large of concern. But it is trickling in.

Our business is 98% solar energy, with a tiny bit of generator backup work and a tiny bit of wind. Sometimes we also have repair jobs. We have lived solar since 2002. We have practical experience and we know how it works. We know how to help others because of this. We have no political agenda in regards to this. We simply believe in solar.

We enjoy the work!!! We love it!! Solar installs never get old and we meet so many wonderful people. Most we have made lasting friendships with! It's a unique and diverse customer base. It makes the job great!