

Missoula County Media Release

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Missoula County Recognized for Sustainability Efforts

Missoula County has been designated the first [SolSmart](#) county in Montana. The SolSmart Bronze designation was awarded for work assisting businesses and homes to 'go solar' by making processes faster, easier and more affordable. In continuation of these efforts, Missoula County has also recently hired Energy Conservation and Sustainability Coordinator Diana Maneta.

"We anticipate leading the ongoing development of private-public partnerships and county community conservation efforts," Commissioner Nicole Rowley said. "Diana and our Energy Corps volunteer are helping address climate change by fostering internal and external sustainability, LEED programs and energy conservation of County facilities."

As a SolSmart designee, Missoula County is helping solar companies reduce the cost of installations. Savings are then passed on to consumers and barriers are removed to support private installation. This allows local homeowners and businesses to more easily obtain affordable and reliable electricity through solar energy.

These actions provide opportunities for increased energy independence and encourage solar companies to do business in the area which drives economic development and creates local jobs.

"At its core, SolSmart is about reducing barriers to solar energy development for homeowners and businesses," Missoula County's Energy Corps AmeriCorps member, Eliot Thompson, said. "Achieving a bronze SolSmart designation confirms Missoula County's commitment to solar energy development and energy independence."

To obtain this designation, Thompson evaluated SolSmart's criteria to identify areas where the County had already taken action. He found that planning staff had received training on best practices for solar technology and that findings about restrictions on solar development had been presented to the Missoula Board of County Commissioners, which will be used in future amendments to development regulations. The SolSmart designation was made possible through the technical assistance of the [Montana Renewable Energy Association](#) (MREA).

Thompson is currently working on upgrading the County's achievement to a Silver designation through updates to the county zoning regulations.

In addition to Thompson's work, Maneta will guide Missoula County's efforts in saving energy and reducing carbon emissions. Maneta will lead the effort to develop a county resiliency and climate action plan. She will also be serving as a resource on sustainability and community resiliency for the public and County departments.

"I care deeply about conservation and sustainability because I believe that we have a responsibility to use our limited resources wisely in order to give our kids and grandkids the chance of a life at least as good as ours," Maneta said. "I'm excited about this position because Missoula County is my home, and it's such a great place to live. Helping our local communities become more sustainable and more resilient will help to make sure it stays that way."

Prior to working at Missoula County, Maneta served as the Executive Director of the nonprofit Montana Renewable Energy Association and has worked as the Sustainability Coordinator for Lewis and Clark County and as an advisor at the California Energy Commission.

Maneta has a master's degree in Energy and Resources from UC Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences.

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The Community and Planning Services department (CAPS) strives to maintain and enhance a quality of life that makes Missoula County an extraordinary place to live, work, and visit. We collaborate with residents, businesses and non-profits, Tribal and other government agencies to help direct the future of Missoula County and our communities.