

## USDA's George Washington Carver Center Solar Power Project Update

The construction a 1.6-megawatt photovoltaic array project at the George Washington Carver Center (GWCC), located in Beltsville, Maryland is anticipated for completion by April, 2015. As part of an Earth Day event, USDA's Office of Operations will be hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the construction of USDA's first major solar power project in the National Capitol Region.



USDA will obtain numerous benefits in using renewable energy power. The solar power farm will make the Department's operations more sustainable; reduce its carbon footprint and dependence on traditional energy sources. The project is also expected to reduce the Carver Center's current energy demand for electricity from the electric grid, subsequently lowering the Department's utility costs. In addition, USDA is using renewable energy power to demonstrate leadership and achieve the goals of multiple laws and regulations which require the use of renewable energy in Federal facilities.

For employees who work at the Carver Center and visitors, the project will also bring changes to their workplace. In addition to having the solar power farm on their workplace "backyard," monitors with live data showing the amount of energy the solar power panels are generating will be installed at the entrance lobby of the Carver Center. The installation of the monitors will provide realtime data to anyone interested in learning more about solar power technology.

The Office of Operations is making significant changes to improve the energy efficiency of the Carver Center. With ongoing energy conservation projects including the solar power project and replacement of inefficient lighting fixtures with new LED lighting, Office Operations staff hope to make the Carver Center a net zero energy building. A net-zero energy building is a residential or commercial building with greatly reduced energy needs through efficiency gains such that the balance of energy needs can be supplied with renewable technologies. In order for the Carver Center to become a net-zero energy facility, the involvement of employees is essential to achieving this goal. Those USDA employees who work at the Carver Center can help reduce energy consumption by turning off their computers and IT peripherals at the end of each work day.