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Wisconsin: Brewery seeks recognition for environmental efforts

Facility runs on 1,000 square feet of solar panels and radiant-floor heat.

B.C. KOWALSKI THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMHERST -- When Central Waters Brewing Co. moved to its new facility in 2007 in Amherst, environmental concerns were on the owners' minds.

But a little recognition never hurts.

Central Waters is applying for Tier 1 status with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. If approved, they'll join 43 other Tier 1 companies as part of the network, and will be the first brewery to do so.

The DNR started the program in 2004 to promote environmentally friendly practices in Wisconsin businesses.

"We realized that these are folks that really get environmental performance," said Mark McDermid, DNR cooperative environmental assistance director.

Paul Graham, president of Central Waters, said green business practices were something the brewery has been conscious of since day one.

The facility runs on 1,000 square feet of solar panels, which heat 1,200 gallons of water to 180 degrees every day to brew its beer. Heat for the building comes from radiant floor heat. Through the combination, the brewery was able to double its production without raising energy costs.

"To be able to double the amount of beer with 0 percent energy costs, that's pretty good," Graham said.

Other local breweries are putting green ideas into practice. Stevens Point Brewery recycles all damaged cans and all cardboard waste, and the company has cut the amount of trash it generates from one large Dumpster per week to the smallest every other week.

And O'so Brewing Company owner Marc Buttera said the brewery hopes to construct a new building this year that would be similar to Central Waters', with fittings to add solar panels later on.

But as far as using solar panels in its brewing operation, Graham said Central Waters is a pioneer. The closest is Wausau's Red Eye Brewing Company, which has a solar panel system on its roof.



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