

Dirty Deals: How clean energy program enriches rule breakers

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 Solar By Degrees

Gov. John Kitzhaber (fourth from left) helps break ground for the solar array at Oregon Tech in Klamath Falls in August 2011. He is standing next to Martin Shain (third from left). The groundbreaking took place four months after a required construction deadline to qualify for a state tax credit. Actual construction of this array didn't start until 2013.

(Courtesy Oregon Tech)

By TED SICKINGER and HILLARY BORRUD

A Seattle-based energy consultant and the state employee he's accused of bribing became the public faces of corruption charges at the Oregon Department of Energy after their arrests last summer.

But it wasn't one rogue employee who enabled consultant Martin Shain to reap \$12 million in green energy tax credits for solar projects that should have failed to qualify, according to thousands of records reviewed by The Oregonian/OregonLive. Four other Energy Department employees, including the director, helped Shain obtain the credits by circumventing program rules and ignoring deadlines lawmakers insisted on.

None of the four has been accused of wrongdoing. All four employees declined to answer questions about their particular roles in greenlighting the tax credits.

But records illustrate that officials scrambled to ensure success of the politically high-profile project. Documents also show how the culture of the agency contributed to the misuse of millions in taxpayer funds.