

California's Solar Program a Big Success

First-Ever Analysis of California's Solar Incentive Program Documents Much Progress, Predicts Bright Future

Oakland, CA – Today, Environment California Research & Policy Center released a new report documenting that California's innovative Million Solar Roofs Initiative, halfway through its legislatively mandated timeline, is on pace to meet its goal of installing 3 gigawatts of solar capacity by 2016, is helping to reduce the cost of solar energy, and is creating thousands of jobs throughout the state. These findings come just as California hits the milestone of installing more than 1 gigawatt of rooftop solar power across the state—a milestone that only five other countries in the world have reached.

"California can become the Saudi Arabia of the sun if it continues to get behind big, successful solar programs," said Michelle Kinman, Clean Energy Advocate with Environment California Research & Policy Center and co-author of the report, *Building a Brighter Future: California's Progress Toward a Million Solar Roofs*. "All signs point to a bright future for solar power in California, meaning cleaner air, cleaner energy, and more jobs."

The 2006 Million Solar Roofs Bill (SB 1 - Murray) was historic in both scope and scale, representing the first unified state effort to turn solar power into a commonplace and affordable energy resource for average citizens. The law established a 10-year, statewide interagency effort, now called the Go Solar California campaign, which includes programs that fund solar projects on homes, commercial businesses, farms, and government and non-profit buildings.

Key findings of the report include:

- Even in a weak economy, California's solar market has been expanding exponentially by about 40 percent per year. If the market continues growing at a rate of 25 percent per year, the state will achieve the 3,000 MW goal by the end of 2016.
- Five years in, the Million Solar Roofs Initiative is one-quarter of the way toward its goal of installing 3,000 MW of distributed solar energy systems by the end of 2016 – putting the program on a pace to meet the overall goal on schedule. Since the first solar panels under the Million Solar Roofs Initiative were connected to the grid in 2007, California has installed nearly 800 MW of solar photovoltaic power – the equivalent of powering 600,000 single family homes.
- California is home to about 20 percent of all solar power companies in the United States, with more than 3,500 firms. These firms employ more than 25,000 people. The industry has roughly doubled in size since 2007, and is a bright spot in our overall economy.
- California has tremendous untapped solar energy potential. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that the state could host more than 80,000 MW of rooftop solar capacity – which could generate more than a third as much electricity as California uses in a year.
- Other countries are demonstrating that it is possible to rapidly expand the solar market and achieve ambitious goals. Germany, for example, has already reached 17,000 MW of solar capacity – nearly 17 times California's current total – through consistent and strong public policy support.

Joining Environment California Research & Policy Center in the release of this first-ever analysis of California's solar incentive program was a diverse group of policy makers, solar businesses and clean energy and green jobs advocates.

California Public Utilities Commission President Michael R. Peevey noted, "Of the total 1,000 megawatts of rooftop solar photovoltaic installed statewide, a record 205 megawatts was installed in 2011 alone. At that pace, the state is on track to meet its goal of 3,000 megawatts of rooftop solar by 2016."

"This milestone is an important reminder that the legislature and governor need to do everything we

can to promote energy independence, lower operating costs for consumers and create jobs for Californians working on clean energy infrastructure,” stated State Assembly Member Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley). “I’m proud to have played a key role in advancing net energy metering. I look forward to continuing to work with Environment California, my colleagues in Sacramento and stakeholders throughout the state as we move even closer to meeting our solar goals and ensuring a brighter energy future for California.”

“Getting to one gigawatt is a fantastic marker of the momentum towards California’s clean energy future,” said Danny Kennedy, President of Sungevity, who hosted today’s event. “Riding the exponential curve of growth, which is akin to the mass adoption of cell phones or satellite TVs, will create many more good jobs and great opportunity for the Golden State.”

“With the Million Solar Roofs program, California made a strategic decision to invest in real solar market transformation—to lay the groundwork for significant cost reduction and the long-term growth of a new industry,” reflected Adam Browning, Executive Director of Vote Solar. “Now at the program’s halfway point we see that investment delivering on its promise.”

If Governor Jerry Brown has his way, California will have twelve times today’s number of solar roofs by 2020. To get there, Environment California and allies are advocating that the state continue to push big, bold policy initiatives including a strong feed-in-tariff program that would enable consumers to generate wholesale solar electricity, a lift of the cap on net metering to continue to support small rooftop solar systems, a mandate that all new homes come equipped with solar systems and a renewal of programs such as the Public Goods Charge.

“More than 100,000 rooftop photovoltaic systems have been installed since the program began,” said Mignon Marks, Executive Director of the California Solar Energy Industries Association. “We’re thrilled that our members have benefited from this program, yet our focus remains building the market for the long term.”

“Thanks to California’s leadership, solar energy is starting to gain major strides in the rest of the country,” stated Andrea Luecke, Executive Director of The Solar Foundation which recently released a report on solar jobs. “What’s more, California’s enormous success is helping put Californians to work with 3,500 solar companies employing 25,000 people.”