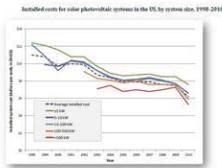


Solar Cheap Enough To Compete Without Subsidies In Some States



Public News Service - WV | January 2013 | Download audio

Environment Energy Policy Consumer Issues Climate Change/Air Quality Budget Policy & Priorities
Livable Wages/Working Families Environmental Justice
January 10, 2013



CHARLESTON, W.Va. - A sharp, long-term fall in the price of solar cells has led The Economist magazine and others to declare that in sunny areas with high electricity prices, solar power is now cheap enough to compete without government subsidies.

Rory McIlmoil, program manager for the energy program at environmental consulting firm Downstream Strategies, says that applies to places such as California - but not West Virginia or the East Coast.

"In those areas, solar is competing with other sources of energy that have higher electricity prices than we experience here, which makes it a lot more likely that solar can compete."

GRAPHIC: The cost of installing solar power has falling dramatically and is likely to continue to fall. Graph by Downstream Strategies.

The price of building a solar power plant is nearing where it would be competitive with a new coal plant of a similar size, he says. Both cost more than a natural-gas plant, but he says solar has the advantage of free fuel.

"Natural gas peaker plants have other costs associated with their operation that solar power does not: High fuel and - depending on the size - high maintenance costs for your traditional power plants versus solar power plants."

The solar industry still depends on significant federal subsidies, although overall, McIlmoil says, the much larger fossil-fuels industries actually receives more in tax breaks. Solar also is limited by the inconsistent nature of the sunshine, although he says power storage and flexible use of the grid are easing some of those issues. Thanks to cheap solar cells, he says, 2010 saw what was then a record level of solar power installed.

"And just one year later, twice that was installed. Roughly 80 percent of the solar power that currently exists in the United States was installed just over the last three years."

One central criticism of renewable-energy sources such as solar power is that they are too expensive. McIlmoil says that's rapidly changing, as solar's explosive growth shows.

More from The Economist is online at economist.com. At current growth rates, the magazine says, wind will surpass nuclear in 10 years.

Dan Heyman, Public News Service - WV

Like this article? Sign up to get headlines via email.

Missouri Clean Energy Jobs Saved from "Fiscal Cliff"

Fiscal Cliff Deal Includes a Reprieve for Wind Production Tax Credit

Time for More Energy-Efficient Homes in Utah?

Winter Weather: Energy Efficiency Keeps Ohioans Warm

Trim Your Tree, Trim Your Lighting Bill

Report: No Future in Oil Shale, Utah's "Rock That Burns"

Critics: Feds Issue "Inadequate" Plan for Hanford Cleanup

Wind Plus Solar Equals Power and Learning for Native American Schools

Saving Energy & Helping Troubled NV Kids

The Renewable Classroom: Electricity + Education

Report: Smart Meters "Take Us Down Wrong Road - Away from Smart Grid"

Future of NC Wind Industry at Stake

Newscasts

PNS Daily News - January 14, 2013

Our national rundown includes updates from two states on efforts to protect children; also an attempt to knockout the death penalty down South; plus we will get you up to speed on what's happening with organic farming out West.



MORE

Tweets

Follow @PNS_News



PNS NEWS @PNS_News 11 Jan
Listened to PNS Daily News - January 11, 2013 from Public News Service
Newscasts @Stitcher @pns_news
stitcher.com/s?eid=20188411 #flu #health
Show Media



The Denver Post @denverpost 10 Jan
ALERT: Colorado Gov. Hickenlooper calls for universal background checks on gun sales: dpo.st/VRLAho #breakingnews
Retweeted by PNS NEWS

Expand

Tweet to @PNS_News