



NEWSLETTER - POTOMAC REGION SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION
February 18, 2008

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General Membership Meeting Announcement

Time:	Saturday, March 29th, from 10:00 AM until Noon
Location:	Davis Library 6400 Democracy Blvd. Bethesda, MD 20817 http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Apps/Libraries/branchinfo/dv.asp
Speaker:	PRSEA's own Charlie Garlow will speak about solar legislation on the national and state levels.

Directions to the Davis Library:

East (Silver Spring area) Take the Capital Beltway (Rt. 495) west past the exit for Rt. 270. Take the next exit onto Old Georgetown Road northbound. Turn left at Democracy Boulevard. Take the first left onto Bells Mill Road. The library is on the left.

West (Virginia) Take the Capital Beltway (Rt. 495 Inner Loop) across the Cabin John Bridge and bear left after 2 miles onto the Rt. 270 spur. Take the first exit onto Democracy Boulevard eastbound. Continue straight through the intersection with Fernwood Road. The library is on the right at the corner of Bells Mill Road. (One block before Old Georgetown Road.)

Meeting Agenda

Welcome
Presentation on national and state energy legislation
Reports on new solar incentives and other topics
Executive Director model for PRSEA
Future planning and nominations for new Board members
Audience questions and discussions

PRSEA Chair
Charlie Garlow
Membership
Jane Hager
PRSEA Board



Purcellville Performing Arts Center Solar Array, Purcellville, Virginia

If you have ever wondered what a 100KW solar array looks like, here is the answer. This impressive system was donated a number of years ago to the Purcellville Performing Arts Center. The shocking news is that the array is not connected! The Center directors have been focused on getting their new building ready for a Spring opening and the array problem has been on the back burner. There may be an opportunity for PRSEA to help resolve this. Details to be presented at the meeting.

Membership Email Server

Jason Fisher set up a Google Group, PRSEA-Members, for all PRSEA members to use. To post a message to the membership, send an email to PRSEA-Members@googlegroups.com, and it will be forwarded to the entire group. Everybody who is a member of PRSEA and gave an email address on the application should have received an invitation to join the group by email a few months ago. The group has seen very little action since it was started. Please use it. If you do not think you are a member of the group, please send an email to info@prsea.org. The group also has a web page, <http://groups.google.com/group/PRSEA-Members>. To view the web page, you have to create an account with a password on <http://groups.google.com>.

Board of Directors

PRSEA is seeking new candidates for the Board of Directors who can help move our organization forward. This need is especially critical now that over half of the current board has retired, moved away, etc. Nominations for candidates for the Board of Directors may be mailed to the address at the top of this newsletter before the General Meeting, or candidates may be nominated at the meeting. Following the General Meeting, ballots for the Board of Directors election will be

mailed to members who have paid their dues for 2008. Newly elected members will serve for two years.

During the General Meeting, we will discuss future project ideas. But we do not have to wait for the meeting. Our email server, PRSEA-Members@googlegroups.com, can forward your ideas to everybody in the group.

MEA Solar Grants

The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) Solar Energy Grant Program is available to residential, business, and local government entities. Details are at:

<http://www.energy.state.md.us/programs/renewable/solargrant/index.html>

In addition, there is now a grant program for geothermal heat pumps. Details are at:

<http://www.energy.state.md.us/programs/renewable/geothermalgrant/index.html>

Write a letter to your local newspapers and to legislators at the Federal and State levels— Let's put renewable energy front and center (Suggestions by Jim Crowley)

Recently power companies have been hyping a need for new power generation facilities and warning about possible blackouts “in a few years” (and I bet they will make sure we have them too). Here are some key points that could be mentioned by prospective letter writers:

1. Although peak summertime demand for electricity does place considerable strain on power plants and transmission lines, it must be recognized that building new facilities solely to meet this peak demand is an expensive proposition. Because such “peak-load” facilities are only used intermittently, the electricity they produce is 3-4 times as expensive as the overall system average cost. Energy conservation measures that help to offset this energy use have a very high value.
2. Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels work best on long summer days--precisely the time that peak energy production is needed. Thus, if more homes were equipped with solar PV panels the need for other power facilities would be reduced. Also, because solar energy is consumed near the source, the need for new transmission lines would be reduced.
3. Solar PV systems have not been allowed to compete fairly against high-cost commercial peak-load facilities. Currently, local PV system owners do not receive a higher price for the electricity that they produce during times of peak demand. If this price incentive were available (as it is in some states and several other countries) it would stimulate residential PV growth.
4. Solar hot water systems are a “no-brainer” solution for offsetting increased residential energy demands. Instead of spending vast sums on new power plants to keep air conditioners running, we should stop wasting energy to heat water that can be cheaply and efficiently warmed by the sun.
5. Finally, let's be clear in understanding that the power companies are in business to sell us more and more electricity, not less and less. Don't expect these companies to take the lead in implementing renewable energy.

Home improvements--Lessons from recent experience by Jim Crowley

Many houses (like ours) have been built using low-quality materials that ultimately require replacement—this includes even major items, such as windows, roofing, siding etc. Here are a few energy saving ideas to consider when upgrading these materials.

Beneath the siding on newer houses is a “house wrap” material, which helps to protect the wall sheathing, and provides a barrier to air and moisture infiltration. When replacing siding, make sure the house wrap is present and in good shape. Commonly, the house wrap will be damaged when the old siding is removed. Doing a full re-wrap affords an opportunity to repair problem areas in the sheathing, and to better seal around doors and windows. Also, some newer wraps have a foil backing that serves as a radiant barrier. Radiant barriers reflect summer heat out and away, and at the same time, reduce the emission of heat towards the air conditioned living space. Radiant barriers can be especially useful beneath surfaces that have a lot of direct sun exposure, such as west facing walls and roofs (see below).

Attics are a critical area for energy savings. First of all, go up there and throw away all that junk! Now that you can move around, consider applying either a foil or a spray-on radiant barrier such as LoMit™ to the underside of the roof. This would be especially beneficial to reduce heat gain in finished attic spaces that are used as bedrooms. Also, check that the soffit vents around the periphery of the roof are not blocked by insulation, and when adding insulation, be sure to keep these soffit areas clear. Finally, if you are replacing the roof shingles, go ahead and have the contractor add a ridge vent. This is a cheap and effective way to improve attic ventilation and will help to reduce air conditioning costs.

Many of us are quick to criticize short-term thinking, particularly in the form of dubious governmental policies related to renewable energy. Let's not fall into the same trap by making cheap, unsustainable material choices when upgrading our homes.

Heads Up!

How would you like to be PRSEA's chapter representative for this conference? There is a \$300 partial reimbursement available; other details will be available at the meeting.

<http://www.ases.org/>

**SOLAR 2008 – May 3-8
San Diego, CA**

Attend SOLAR 2008 and discover where the industry is headed.

SOLAR 2008 is the premier technical conference for solar energy and energy efficiency professionals in the U.S. Now in its 37th year, this industry-leading conference series offers you the emerging trends, technological breakthroughs, industry insight, and connections you need to stay ahead.

To join, mail this form with your annual dues to:
Potomac Region Solar Energy Association (PRSEA)
attn: PRSEA Membership
P.O. Box 3315
Annapolis, MD 21403

**I would like to join the
Potomac Region Solar Energy Association.**

Enclosed is my check for one year annual dues:
(please check appropriate member category below)
____ Student (\$10.00); ____ Educator (\$15.00);
____ Individual (\$25.00);

Please send correspondence to my ____ Home ____ Business address *(please check one)*.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Occupation: _____

Business Name (if applicable) _____

Work Address: Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Home Address:

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip/Postal Code: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Primary areas of interest (include additional sheet if necessary):

Member of American Solar Energy Society (ASES) ____ Yes ____ No.

I am also a member of the following groups: _____
