# TINECUS

The Enterprise F1

June 12, 2017

# INSIDE



#### **Looking for a career?**

For some time, the tech sector has been crying the blues about a lack of qualified workers and now the energy industry has joined the refrain. A panel at the recent Governor's Utah Energy Development Summit in Salt Lake City discussed the ways to prepare employees for these good jobs.

page F3

#### **Energy Lists:**

Solar Energy Companies page F6

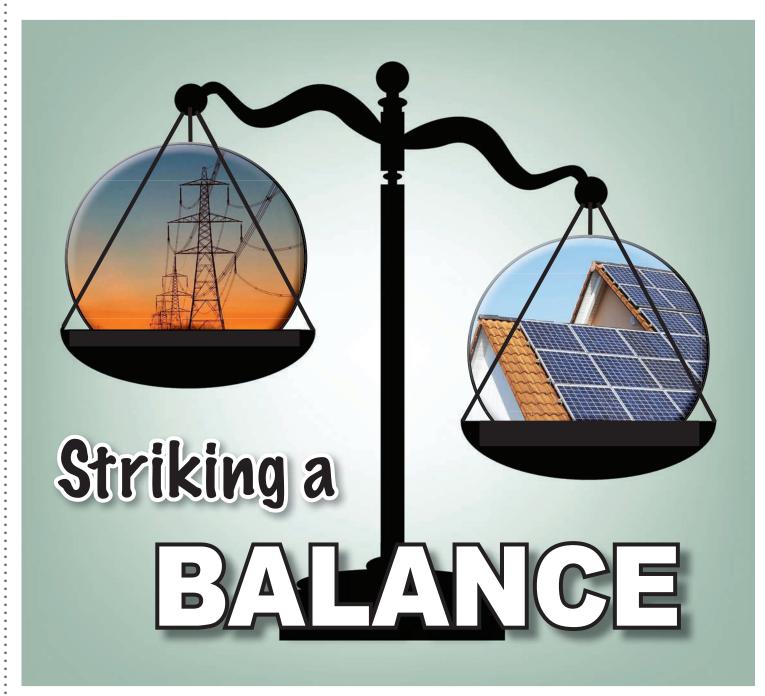
**Utah Oil Refineries** 

page F10

#### **Issue Sponsor:**



# **ENERGY**



Traditional utilities, solar energy companies and public interest groups are seeking an equitable and sustainable rate structure for residential rooftop power generation

#### Frances Johnson

The Enterprise

With settlement discussions underway regarding a proposal from Rocky Mountain Power to alter the rate structure for residential solar customers, many solar companies, interest groups and individual customers are speaking out against the proposed changes.

The catalyst for the proposed rate change was simple, said Dave Eskelsen, company spokesman for Rocky Mountain Power: The current rate structure for residential customers

who generate solar energy is not fair to non-solar customers.

Residential solar customers are currently part of a program called net metering. Started in 2002, the program was "designed to make an allowance for customers who wanted to produce some of their own energy while maintaining their connection to the utility company," Eskelsen said. A special meter installed on the customer's property measures how much energy the customer creates on their own and how much energy they consume from the utility company, and then calculates

the net, or difference.

In 2008 the program was altered to give residential net metering customers a credit — at the retail price — for the energy they produced in excess of their consumption.

However, the cost to the utility of providing electricity is more than just the cost of the energy itself, Eskelsen said, and the credit system for net metering solar customers created a shortfall in revenue used for administrative and maintenance costs that

#### **METERING**

from page F1

apply to all utility customers.

Rocky Mountain conducted a study that found a typical rooftop solar customer underpays their actual cost of service by about \$400 per year. This shortfall is currently shifted to other, nonnet metering customers who are subsidizing \$6.5 million each year. That number could grow to as much as \$78 million annually if the rate is not addressed. Over the next 20 years the cost shift to other custo, mers is estimated to be about \$667 million, the company said.

And that subsidy, Eskelsen said, is what makes the current rate structure unfair.

"We've determined that net metering customers are a different kind of customer and they deserve a different rate," Eskelsen said. "It's fair for other customers and it's fair for the net metering customer. Our only object here is to come up with a rate that is fair to everyone and that covers the cost of providing service to different kinds of customers. As long as everyone uses the utility basically the same, [it's] not a problem. But the way a net metering customer uses the utility is fundamentally different."

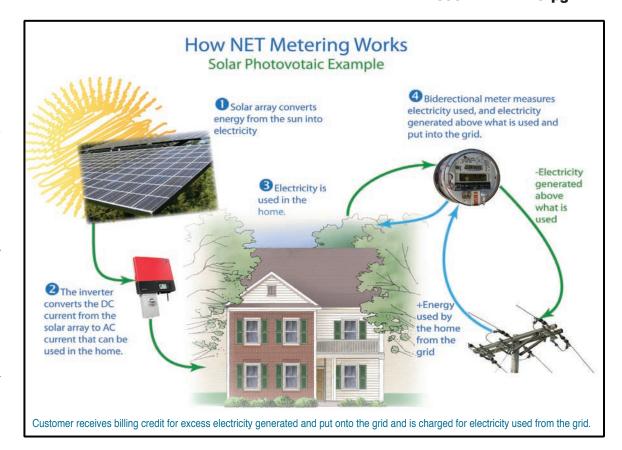
Under the proposed new structure, rates for residential net metering customers would be divided into three parts: a fixed charge of \$15 that covers the administrative and maintenance costs not being supported by the current net metering program, a \$9.02-per-kilowatt charge for energy used during peak periods and a 3.81-cent-per-kilowatt charge for energy used outside peak demand hours.

The new rate structure is in line with the rate structure applied to industrial and commercial utility customers, and would only apply to new netmetering customers, Eskelsen added. Customers who are already part of the program will continue with the original rate structure.

Solar companies argue that the proposed changes will discourage new solar customers entirely.

"The solar industry in Utah exploded because of a simple financing option that allows customers to replace their power bill with nothing out of pocket. The proposed rate structure would double customers' monthly payment in some cases, effectively eliminating that option," said Jess Phillips,

see METERING pg. F11



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# **A COMMON PROBLEM**

# Energy sector not exempt from struggle to find qualified workers

#### **Brice Wallace**

The Enterprise

It's been a common refrain in Utah: an industry struggling with finding skilled employees.

Most often, the focus has been on the high-tech industry, but recently it was the energy sector singing the tune and trying to find ways to make young people aware of the current and future opportunities in that field.

A panel discussing workforce development at the Governor's Utah Energy Development Summit in Salt Lake City discussed the many initiatives and programs that have been established to push more interest in energy but said it remains a challenge to stir up excitement.

"How often do you hear, when you ask a child, 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' and they say, 'I want to be in the energy industry'?" asked Elissa Richards, president and chief executive officer of the National Energy Foundation. "Really, that's our job, to make them aware of the energy industry. We're really creating energy literacy."

Programs such as those extolled by the panelists create "initial awareness of energy and then some excitement about it," she said.

Alyssa Kay, energy management program manager at Salt Lake Community College, said young people ask about the kinds of jobs they can get with a degree in energy efficiency but often are not aware that their love of computers can be transferred into energy-related positions.

"There are so many opportunities in IT and software development in the energy industry, and that's not something that kids are necessarily thinking about," Kay said. "They are thinking about videogame design and some of the more-traditional IT roles, but really [we should be] emphasizing the applicability of IT in the energy industry."

Panelists said certificate programs, internships, hands-on workshops and other activities are ways to get students interested and on a path to energy careers. Cory Filek, maintenance and liability manager at the Chevron Salt Lake refinery, said a

partnership with the Davis Education Foundation resulted in a project involving K-12 students conducting engineering problem-solving.

"It's a pretty incredible way to get people interested," Filek said. "The idea that kids are drawn to tech-

see WORKFORCE pg. F4



A panel at the recent Governor's Utah Energy Development Summit in Salt Lake City discussed the initiatives and programs designed to push young people's interest toward preparing for jobs in the energy sector.



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Wheeler



#### **WORKFORCE**

from page F3

nology and computers is fascinating to me because they may not think of a career in the energy business that way, but if you look at some of the tools that we use in our business, having that IT and technical background is an amazing benefit. Our challenge would be, how do we tie the two of those things together?"

Eric Packenham, senior lecturer and director of the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) at Utah State University, lauded the Physics Day activities at Lagoon amusement park,

where 10,000 students from three states to look at science underlying an amusement park and check out companies' information booths.

"I think that's where we need to feed off of some of those natural connections and collaborations, because that's where those couplings will happen and then we'll see some of that residual outcome later," Packenham said.

"There's always an awareness gap," said Ben Hart, deputy director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development. "I mean, when you say 'energy,' what does that mean? How does that resonate with our students? Being able to allow them to put their hands on something is so important."

Recent advances in energy development are a double-edged sword, full

of both opportunities and challenges, according to Kay.

"I think that the path to development in technology and energy is both one of the most exciting things about being in the energy industry and one of the most frustrating things about being in the energy industry," she said. "Because, really, when you're looking at training students in pathways for jobs, what you're looking at is, the jobs that they're going to be taking 10 years from now may not even exist 10 years from now. So that ... puts us in a unique position, I think"

For example, she cited building automation. It existed a decade ago but was not well known. Then companies sprang up and needed technicians. "And now, basically anybody who's a facili-

ties or maintenance professional needs to know how to run their systems on the computer, even," Kay said. "They're not using wrenches, like they used to."

Kay said a new pathway model makes it possible to have students graduate from high school, go directly to work, decide what they want to do for a living and then work to get the education needed for it. That runs counter to the traditional model of graduating from high school and then college before entering the workforce.

"As we introduce our own children into potential career paths, remember that the trades represent a good, steady living, and as technology increases, so too do the demands on a tradesperson," Filek said. "I think sometimes we do a disservice to the next generation by focusing so heavily on post-secondary education, so heavily on the degrees, that we miss out."

But how can businesses play a bigger role? Richards suggested that company officials can offer to come into classrooms and serve as "ambassadors" for the industry.

"Kids love to ask questions," she said. "They're fascinated by it once they start sharing things about their job and some of the skills they have and some of their daily tasks. I think kids need to have those experiences. They need to see that their neighbors are working for utilities — kind of driveway conversations about energy and how it's such a part of who we are that we don't really pay as much attention to it as we need to."

Richards said misconceptions about the industry should be targeted to ensure young people get accurate information about the realities of the industry, and she also urged companies to get involved. Creating a better talent pipeline means increasing awareness and investing in education, she said.

"Create awareness among these students who are growing and making decisions, and then a presence," Richards said. "Have a presence in your community, with your community members in schools and things like that. If you can really start to do that and they can put a face to your company and the good things that you're doing, then it starts to make a lot more sense. You start to get kids who are interested in entering the energy workforce."



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When product is going downhill at the Geneva Rock quarry, gravity moves the conveyor belt system with enough force to generate electricity that can be used to power other parts of the operation.

# Investing in the alternative

# Utah is making strides in adopting clean energy and fueling resources and it's the construction industry leading the way

Air quality is a matter everyone cares about — especially in Utah, a state that experiences some of the nation's most extreme winter inversions. When inversion conditions combine with high levels of particulate matter (PM2.5) the air pollution is trapped and concentrated,



producing poor air quality and affecting the health of everyone living throughout the Wasatch Front.

While many believe air pollution is the result of big business,

manufacturing and mining, the reality is, vehicles are the primary source of precursor emissions for PM2.5 pollutants.

It's your car, my car and anyone else's car driving down the road on a day-to-day basis that is producing nearly two-thirds of the typical winter workday emissions, with the second-most contributing sources actually coming from homes and buildings.

The small choices millions of Utahns make each day affect air quality. When and how frequently you drive, how often you mow your lawn, what degree you set your thermostat at, etc.

"Law is important, regulation is important, rules are important, but it will be the community who will help us clean the air," said Ted Wilson, executive director of Utah Clean Air Partnership (UCAIR).

In the past few years, a major Utah construction entity has steppedup in recognizing the part it plays in vehicle emissions.

Geneva Rock Products, a 63-year-

old Utah construction company, has made a sizable investment in clean energy.

In January, the company held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new natural gas fueling station and 25

compressed natural gas (CNG) concrete mixer trucks. This \$8 million fleet and facility — just part of a \$30

see GENEVA pg. F9



Company and state officials cut a ribbon to mark the opening of the Geneva Rock Products natural gas fueling station at Point of the Mountain in Salt Lake County. The installation and 25 mixer trucks that run on natural gas are part of Geneva's \$30 million investment in clean air initiatives.

# **SOLAR COMPANIES**

Ranked by Megawatts (DC) Installed in 2015



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	Company Name Address	Phone Web	Total Megawatts Installed 2015	Total Megawatts Installed	Employees	Primary Service	Primary Market	Top Executive
1	Vivint Solar 1800 Ashton Blvd. Lehi, UT 84043	801-377-9111 vivant.com	230.80	458.90	4,000	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	David Bywater CEO
2	Brahma Hunt 1920 W. Alexander St. SLC, UT 84119	801-931-4212 brahmahunt.com	133.60	685.00	1,400	*EPC	Commercial	*
3	Vision Solar 5255 Edgewood Dr., Ste.125 Provo, UT 84604	888-781-7074 visionsolar.com	12.89	22.89	350	*EPC	Residential	Dave Rasmussen President
4	<b>Auric Solar</b> 2310 S. 1300 W. SLC, UT 84119	801-878-3363 auricsolar.com	7.49	14.50	140	*EPC	Residential	Jess Phillips Owner Trent Vansice Owner
5	Intermountain Wind & Solar 1953 W. 2425 S. Woods Cross, UT 84087	801-298-5255 intermountainwind andsolar.com	6.28	17.5	109	*EPC	Residential	Doug Shipley CEO
6	<b>Zing Solar</b> 826 E. State Road American Fork, UT 84003	888-244-0231 zingsolar.com	5.90	7.90	175	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Jimmy Slemboski President
7	<b>Legend Solar</b> 204 Playa Della Rosita Washington, UT 84780	435-319-4060 legendsolar.com	3.86	4.86	140	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Shaun Alldredge Owner
8	Affiliate Solar 1457 W. 40 S., Ste. 400 Lindon, UT 84042	844-500-7652 affiliatesolar.com	2.00	3.00	50	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Randy Eaves Owner
9	Creative Energies 455 W. 1700 S. SLC, UT 84115	801-487-6489 cesolar.com	1.85	6.72	20	*EPC	Commercial	Scott Kane Owner & Co-Founder
10	Synergy Power 531 River Meadow Drive Alpine, UT 84004	801-420-0391 synergypowerpv. com	1.75	4.00	55	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Chad Hofheins President
11	Progressive Power Solutions 767 S. Auto Mall Drive American Fork, UT 84003	801-367-7282 ppssolar.com	1.70	3.70	15	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Norman E. Harrison CEO
12	Go Solar Group 4892 S. Commerce Drive, Ste. C Murray, UT 84107	801-938-8805 gosolargroup.com	1.40	3.20	25	Rooftop Contractor	Residential	Keven Jensen CEO
13	Sunlight Solar Systems 3959 S. West Temple SLC, UT 84107	801-750-5974 sunlightsolar.pro	1.10	6.10	8	Rooftop Contractor	Commercial	Marc Staker Owner



# ALTERNATIVE

# Bloomberg exec: We need to think of new energy technologies as mainstream

#### **Brice Wallace**

The Enterprise

New energy technologies "should not be called alternative energy anymore," according to an industry watcher.

Speaking at the Governor's Utah Energy Development Summit in Salt Lake City, Ethan Zindler, head of U.S. research for Bloomberg's New Energy Finance Ltd. (NEF), said most of the money being invested in energy is being used to develop those so-called alternative energy sources.

Over the past 12 years, he said, \$2.5 trillion has been invested in wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, biofuel, small hydro and technologies related to improving energy efficiency. And those investments are causing "profound" impacts on the energy sector already and will continue to do so.

"The way in which energy gets produced, delivered and consumed are being fundamentally transformed, and have been being transformed over the last decade or so," Zindler said. "And these changes are fundamentally empowering businesses and homeowners, presenting them with expanded choices and control over consumption. In fact, I would argue that we've entered the era of the empowered consumer when it comes to energy."

Those empowered consumers can, for example, analyze and adjust heating, air conditioning and electricity using their smartphones. In some places, they can select "where they prefer to buy their electrons from," with options including "green" power programs, producing power themselves with roof-top PV (photovoltaic) systems, and better battery technologies for storing electricity, he said.

What's more, motorists can buy vehicles with engines that burn gas, diesel, ethanol, methanol or hydrogen, or buy vehicles with electric motors or hybrids. They can turn their garages into fueling stations with wall plugs.

"Think about it: A decade ago, relatively few of these options were available," Zindler said. "The variety of choices available to us now has dramatically expanded and given rise to what I said is the empowered consumer, and, of course, I mean that pun."

While relatively few Americans have the inclination or income to become an energy geek like himself, Zindler said, prices for those new options continue to fall. The price of a PV solar module is down 90 percent since 2008, helping solar generating capacity grow to 14,000 megawatts,

and the localized cost of energy from wind farms has dipped by half since 2009, allowing wind to surpass hydro as the nation's fourth-largest power resource, at 8 percent of power consumed

"We at the NEF believe that further growth and eventual mass adoption of these technologies is not just probable, but it's inevitable," he said.

While consumers expect to have more choices, cheaper energy and 100 percent reliability, those new technologies are "inevitably creating some challenges, and, yes, some conflicts," Zindler said.

For example, he noted that many

traditional auto dealerships make money not by selling cars but by servicing sold vehicles. However, electric cars require less servicing because of fewer moving parts.

Another example is the disruption being experienced by the owners of large-scale power coal, natural gas and nuclear power generation facilities who are seeing renewables edging their way onto the grid, he said. Wind, solar and geothermal generation has essentially no associated fuel costs, which brings energy prices down, he said — "and that's not necessarily great news for incumbent generators."

"What we have seen repeatedly is

that the influx of this new generation hurts the incumbent market players. It's not easy if you're an existing coal or nuclear plant that has been selling its power at a certain price when suddenly a much-lower-priced competitor comes into the market," Zindler said.

Compounding things for local utilities is the lost revenue from distributed generation facilities, in the form of small-scale roof-top generation on homes and businesses. Add to that net energy metering, which allows those smaller generators to sell excess power

see ALTERNATIVE page F10





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#### **GENEVA**

from page F5

million investment in clean air initiatives — is the equivalent of taking 8,000 cars off the road each year.

According to the Utah Clean Cities Coalition, natural gas is an abundantly available, domestic fuel with inherently cleaner burning qualities. In terms of emissions, the science is simple. CNG burns one carbon versus diesel burning 14 carbons. The air shed of the valley benefits exponentially from a move to alternative fuels.

Geneva Rock's 400-horsepower CNG engines emit approximately 50 percent less PM2.5, 40 percent less carbon dioxide, 90 percent less carbon monoxide, and 35 to 60 percent less nitrogen oxides when compared to their traditional diesel-fueled counterparts. The mixers also use 100 percent American-produced fuel.

"Lowering our emissions is of utmost importance to us as a company and guides our overall operating decisions," said Jim Golding, president of Geneva Rock, in a press release distributed for the event. "We're going to continue to raise the standard in environmental stewardship."

The company didn't start with its fleets. Its transition to clean energy and environmental conservancy has been a part of the culture for decades.

In 2013, Geneva Rock built a state-of-the-art, zero-waste watering system at its Point of the Mountain operation to reduce dust that is typically conjured from regulated mining activity. The structure goes far above and beyond Utah Division of Air Quality, OSHA and MSHA standards and by some accounts, is the most extensive and expensive dust-control solution of its kind ever done in Utah by a sand and gravel company.

High-power water cannons, sprinklers and water trucks - most visible from the freeway — re-use existing water found on the property to enhance standard dust control techniques. Last year, the company improved its air quality ratings and recycled 1.7 billion gallons of water using this irrigation structure.

To add to its energy efficiency at the Point of the Mountain operation, Geneva completed a conveyor belt system to transport materials in 2014. Instead of hauling materials across the mountain facility in large construction equipment to crushing plants and pit piles at the base, the gravity-fed overland conveyor belt moves the material for them at a dustfree, energy-generating pace. The material handling system transports 3,500 tons of sand and gravel per hour, moving the aggregate more than 2,550 feet at 400 feet per minute. The weight of the material moving at a downward incline of up to 19 percent produces excess energy to run other operations at the plant.

Geneva Rock's conveyor solution generates enough clean energy to support 127 homes each year.

According to engineers from Superior Industries, as reported in their interview with Pit & Quarry magazine, another major driver behind the investment in an overland conveyor system is the reduction of particulate matter in the air. Highly scrutinized due to tightening environmental regulations, individual wheeled haulage units, such as dozers, loaders and haul trucks, emit and stir pollution along the entire transfer path. Superior engineers argue that overland conveyor systems offer quiet and almost

dust-free operation

Beyond taking responsibility for its own equipment and facilities, Geneva hopes to be a community partner in supporting changes for good, said Golding. Geneva Rock donated \$25,000 to UCAIR to support local grants and education programs in 2017.

UCAIR is a statewide clean air partnership that works with individuals, businesses and communities to make changes to improve Utah's air quality. Programs include Air Assist for small businesses, Innovator's Competition for air quality grants and targeted grants for promoting individual behavior changes.

"We all share ownership and responsibility for Utah's air quality," Wilson said. "We applaud Geneva Rock for leading its industry in contributing to a better air quality solution. There is no silver bullet to solving Utah's air quality, but every small change adds to a collective bigger step toward better health, a better economy and better overall quality of life for all of us."

It's exciting to see how the changes of one organization can produce benefits for the entire state. Just think of the improvements we could make as a community, if each person took the opportunity to assess their choices and make changes for the better.

Ray Gammell is the vice president of equipment and facilities at Clyde Companies in Orem. He oversees the operation of more than 75 locations and directs purchasing and maintenance of a vehicle and construction equipment fleet that exceeds 9,000 units.



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1	<b>Tesoro SLC</b> 74 W. 900 N. SLC, UT 84103	801-606-2180 tso.corp.com	63,000	250	1908	Tesoro Corp.	Karma Thomson
2	<b>Chevron</b> 2351 N. 1100 W. SLC, UT 84116	801-539-7229 chevron.com	50,000	300	1948	Chevron USA Inc.	Doug Tottenger
3	HollyFrontier 1070 W. 500 S. West Bountiful, UT 84087	801-299-6600 hollyfrontier.com	45,000	260	1932	Holly Frontier	Scott White
4	Big West Oil LLC 333 W. Center St. North Salt Lake, UT 84054	801-296-7700 bigwestoil.com	35,000	185	1949	FJ Management	Michael Swanson
5	Silver Eagle Refining Inc. 2355 S. 1100 W. Woods Cross, UT 84087	801-298-3211 silvereaglerefining.net	10,250	*	1954	The International Group Inc.	Jerry Lockie



\*Did not disclose. Please note that some firms chose not to respond, or failed to respond in time to our inquiries. All rights reserved.

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## **ALTERNATIVE**

from page F7

to the grid at a certain price.

"It's really no surprise that incumbent utilities around the world often have what at best can be described as an awkward relationship with PV systems installers," Zindler said. "From a utility perspective, PV system-owning consumers enjoy all the benefits of being attached to the grid but essentially don't pay their fair share for that infrastructure. That leaves other ratepayers — often less-affluent ratepayers, it should be noted — to carry more of the load of transmission and technical costs."

That, he said, is an important issue in Utah, which now has the second-largest per capita volume of PV in the U.S.

While the changes in the energy sector have been profound over the past couple of decades, "they show no sign of letting up soon," Zindler said. While the changes may cause short-term disruption for some, in the long run they will benefit everyone, he said.

"Frankly, to bet that we're going to return to some kind of status quo and not continue to change, I would argue may be the riskiest bet that we can make of all," he said. "Change is now the new normal in the energy sector."



A Bloomberg research director told the recent Governor's Utah Energy Development Summit in Salt Lake City that forms of energy such as this wind farm in the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon should no longer be thought of as "alternative."

### **METERING**

from page F2

CEO at West Valley City-based Auric Solar. The company is one of the parties currently involved in settlement discussions about the proposed changes. "We think it's reasonable for solar customers to pay either a one-time or monthly fee to pay their fair share for maintenance. Anything more than that doesn't make sense. Most studies conducted across the U.S. have found that rooftop solar creates a net gain when it comes to utility costs and maintenance."

Fewer solar customers creates an economic threat to the companies that support them, Phillips added. He cited a similar rate change proposal in Nevada that wiped out 99 percent of solar companies operating there. It has since been overturned.

"The public has demanded that solar must be an option and recently the Nevada Legislature passed a bill to bring back solar power net metering to Nevada," he said.

Nonprofit groups also oppose the proposed rate changes. The Utah Solar Energy Association (USEA) is currently hosting a petition on its website called "Help Save the Future of Solar in Utah."

"The adverse impacts of Rocky Mountain Power's proposed rate increases cannot be overstated. It will kill consumer choice, economic growth, the solar industry and thousands of Utah jobs," the website states.

And USEA is not alone in its opinion. The organization recently commissioned a survey, conducted by Dan Jones & Associates, that found most Utahns agree the proposed rate structure discriminates against customers with rooftop solar generating capabilities, though, of the 834 respondents, the vast majority (94 percent) do not have their own solar energy system.

The survey also highlighted the concern that a rate structure that discourages new solar customers will have a negative environmental impact. More than 80 percent of survey respondents said improved air quality (84 percent) and a cleaner environment (83 percent) are the most important factors when considering new solar rates. USEA said the study Rocky Mountain Power is using as a basis for its rate change proposal takes into account only costs and not other tangible and intangible benefits of solar power. USEA maintains that a study with a long-term view of generational costs and benefits of solar, especially the environmental benefits that are most important to Utahns, should be conducted.

Solar providers such as Auric Solar agree.

"Solar power uses the natural resource of the sun to produce clean, reliable and renewable energy. It's hitting our rooftop every day for free. It's a convenient and clean source of electricity that we are wasting if we don't tap into it," Phillips said. "A clean, reliable and renewable resource like solar energy is smart for the environment. We've got to do something to clean Utah's air — and reducing our dependence on coal will make an immediate impact."

Utilities are not trying to eliminate solar growth, Eskelsen argues. They are simply trying to find a rate structure that is sustainable and equitable. He said utilities in Arizona and California have experienced distribution disruptions as a result of revenue shortfalls caused by net metering, and

Utah utilities are eager to avoid the same pitfalls. Simply put, net metering as it stands is not a financially sustainable model for utility companies in Utah, he said.

"The pace at which net metering was growing prompted us to solve this problem before it became an issue," Eskelsen said. "If net metering continues to grow, it could become a problem. We want to be ready with a pricing scheme that makes sense for everyone."

He added that the proposed rate structure will not increase the company's revenue, but will simply address current budget shortfalls in a more equitable way.

A large group of stakeholders
— including utilities, solar companies and environmental and clean energy special interests — are currently involved in settlement discus-

sions with the goal of reaching an agreement about the rate changes, which could take the form of a new or altered rate proposal. From there the proposal goes to the Utah Public Service Commission (UPSC), which can accept the proposal, reject it or suggest additional changes.

"The standard for the commission is that it is generally in the public interest," Eskelsen said.

And despite current disagreement about how to go about it, traditional utilities and solar energy advocates agree that public interest is and should be everyone's goal.

"The world is changing. We are smarter and we no longer can operate on non-renewable energy," Phillips said. "Finding a solution that works for both utilities and solar companies is the best decision for our economy and community."



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