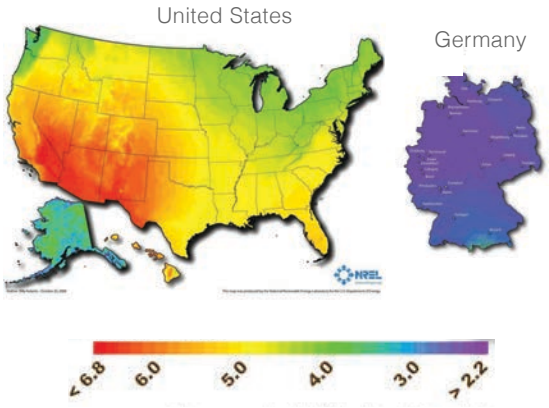
SOLAR ENERGY MYTHS

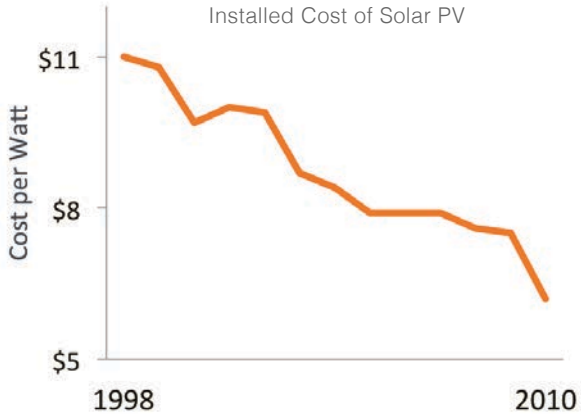
7 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SOLAR PV

MYTH: IT ISN'T SUNNY ENOUGH WHERE I LIVE.

FACT: SOLAR WORKS IN EVERY STATE.

While solar irradiation levels vary across the United States, a homeowner can produce a significant portion of their electric load from their roof space no matter what state they are in (assuming un-shaded, proper tilt, orientation and installation). Germany, with a solar resource equivalent to Seattle and Alaska (illustrated in the figure to the right), has six times the installed capacity of the United States.[1]





MYTH: SOLAR IS TOO EXPENSIVE.

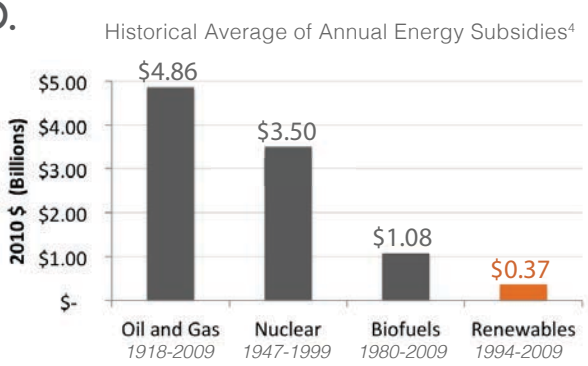
FACT: SOLAR IS COST COMPETITIVE.

While solar power isn't free, global solar industry growth has reduced costs steadily and rapidly in recent years, dropping 36% in the past two years.[2] Combined with recent technological advancements, solar is cost competitive with natural gas peaking plants todayand is predicted to be cheaper than coal within the next five years.[3]

MYTH: SOLAR IS ONLY AN OPTION BECAUSE OF LAVISH SUBSIDIES.

FACT: ALL ENERGY SOURCES ARE SUBSIDIZED.

Every energy technology takes advantage of subsidies. Fossil fuel and nuclear power enjoy loan guarantees, accelerated depreciation, tax credits, caps on producer liabilities, and even bankruptcy protection. In the case of renewable energy, subsidies have only been in place in recent years, whereas the majority of fossil fuel and nuclear subsidies have been in place up to a century.[4]



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MEISTER CONSULTANTS GROUP

Chad Laurent
Meister Consultants Group
(617) 209-1986 | mc-group.com

SOLAR ENERGY MYTHS

MYTH: SOLAR DOESN'T CREATE JOBS AND WE CAN'T COMPETE WITH CHINA.

FACT: SOLAR CREATES 7 TIMES MORE JOBS THAN COAL[5]

Over 100,000 Americans work in the solar industry today, and in 2010 solar employment grew 6.8% while the general economy grew 0.7%. By way of comparison, 79,500 Americans work in iron & steel manufacturing and 84,000 work in coal mining. Solar creates 7 times more jobs per MW than coal.[5] Many solar jobs are in installation and maintenance—jobs that cannot be outsourced to China. Furthermore, the US is a net-exporter of solar technologies.

MYTH: SOLAR TAKES UP TOO MUCH LAND.

FACT: SOLAR WORKS ON UNDERUTILIZED SPACES.

There is plenty of available roof space, landfill, and brownfield space to install significant amounts of solar. Cities and towns across the country are developing solar projects on landfills and other unused brownfield sites, and businesses can take advantage of large roof spaces.

MYTH: SOLAR TECHNOLOGY IS NEW AND WILL QUICKLY BECOME OUTDATED

FACT: SOLAR IS A MATURE TECHNOLOGY.

Basic solar photovoltaic technologies have been around for more than 30 years. While efficiencies have increased and costs have decreased, solar PV systems built in the 1970s still produce the same product (kWhs of electricity) as any modern solar PV system. The solar industry, like other electricity generating industries, does not evolve in the same way that the electronics industry has. If solar makes sense for you today, then there is no reason to wait to take advantage of the benefits of solar power's benefits.

MYTH: SOLAR IS ONLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES.

FACT: SOLAR IS FOR EVERYONE.

90% of Americans think that it's important to support the development of solar power.[6] Everyone from firefighters to the US military and NASCAR have adopted and are using solar power. In addition, large companies like Google, Wal-Mart, Toys-R-Us, Staples and others have installed large amounts of solar to power their operations.

SOURCES

1. REN21 Renewables 2012 Global Status Report.
2. GTM Research Solar Market Insight 2011 Year-in-Review
3. PV Prices from DOE, Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy, $1/Watt Photovoltaic Systems, May 2011.
4. DBL Investors, 2011.
5. Energy Policy, vol 38, issue 2, February 2010. Solar Foundation 2011 National Jobs Census. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: May 2010 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates.
6. Schott North America, 2010.

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