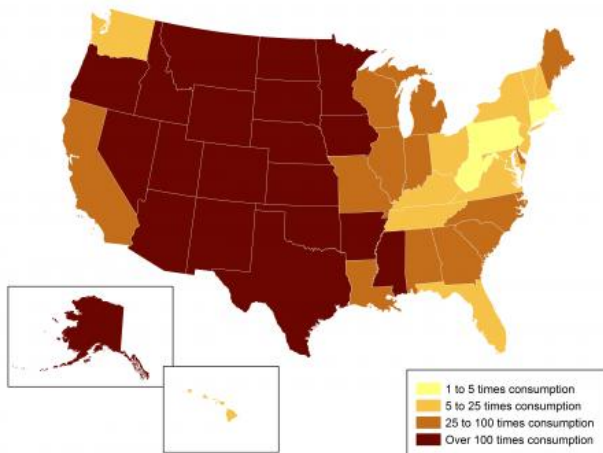


# America's place in the sun: Energy report sets goal

24 December 2014, by Nancy Owano



Solar Electricity Technical Potential Compared with Electricity Consumption

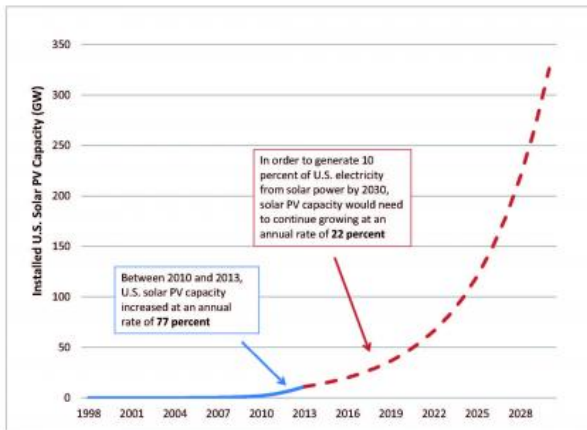
A recent energy report said that America should build on the recent growth in solar energy by setting a goal of obtaining at least 10 percent of its electricity from solar power by 2030. "Star Power: The Growing Role of Solar Energy in America" from the Environment America Research & Policy Center said that the federal government should commit to a baseline goal of obtaining at least 10 percent of the nation's electricity from solar energy by that time.

"We can get to 10 percent solar by 2030 if we just keep our foot on the accelerator," said Rob Sargent, energy program director for Environment America and co-author of the report. Factors such as solar installation costs falling; efficiency of solar cells rising; and threats of pollution and global warming looming contribute to the notion that [solar power](#) is becoming a more attractive source of energy. All the same, the very idea that solar would be able to generate 10 percent of the nation's electricity in less than two decades is a goal that

many once thought improbable, yet "getting to 10 percent of U.S. electricity from solar should happen far sooner than 2030" in the opinion of Jigar Shah, president of San Francisco-based Generate Capital, a specialty finance company focused on funding small-scale, resource-efficient infrastructure.

Among the report's recommendations is that tax credits be extended for [solar energy](#). The report said that the federal government, for example, has often taken an "on-again/ off-again" approach to supporting renewable energy. "With a key financial incentive for solar energy – federal tax credits for residential and business solar installations – now scheduled to expire at the end of 2016, the [federal government](#) should extend these incentives and consider making them permanent with the value phasing down over time as solar expands. Non-profit organizations and local governments that are ineligible for tax credits should be able to qualify for grants and similar benefits."

More than half of all new U.S. electricity generating capacity came from solar installations in the first half of 2014; the United States now has enough solar electric capacity installed to power more than 3.2 million homes, said Environment America.



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### The United States Can Generate 10 Percent of Its Electricity from Solar Power by 2030

"If 10 percent of our electricity came from pollution-free solar power, the United States would reduce its global warming emissions by 280 million metric tons in 2030 – the equivalent of taking 59 million cars off the road." The report said that at that scale, it would help achieve the goals of the U.S. EPA's Clean Power Plan. "Proposed in June 2014, the Clean Power Plan sets national and state-by-state targets and deadlines for the reduction of power plant emissions, with the aim of reducing CO2 emissions from electricity production by 30 percent compared with 2005 levels."

The report referred to solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity," or "solar PV," for installed solar photovoltaic systems, distributed and utility-scale. "Solar electricity capacity" referred to all solar technologies that generate electricity, including concentrating solar power systems that use the sun's heat rather than its light to generate [electricity](#). The report's figures did not include other solar energy technologies, such as solar water heating.

**More information:** —

[www.environmentamerica.org/new ... rcent-solar-us-reach](http://www.environmentamerica.org/new ... rcent-solar-us-reach)

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