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Solar Energy Options

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Solar Talks Take Place in Wheeling and Morgantown

By [GLYNIS BOARD](#) ([PEOPLE/GLYNIS-BOARD](#))

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A recent report—[Using Solar PV to Create Economic Diversity in West Virginia, Five Policy Recommendations](#)

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[http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/01/JPG/files/201402/Aaron_Sutch_-_Wheeling_-_01.JPG](#)
Enlarge image (http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wvpr/files/201402/Aaron_Sutch_-_Wheeling_-_01.JPG)

Aaron Sutch, Energy Program Manager at the Mountain Institute

[/solar_policy_white_paper_final_draft_x_pdf_version.pdf](#)—was written by [The Mountain Institute](#) (<http://www.mountain.org/>) and [Downstream Strategies](#) (<http://www.downstreamstrategies.com/>). Among its recommendations are: creating tax incentives for individuals and businesses, third party financing for nonprofits and

local governments and the expansion of net metering where owners of solar energy sell what they don't use to the power company.

This [report \(http://www.mountain.org/updates/press-release-report-explains-benefits-solar-energy-west-virginia-and-provides-policy-recomm\)](http://www.mountain.org/updates/press-release-report-explains-benefits-solar-energy-west-virginia-and-provides-policy-recomm) caught the attention of Robin Mahonen, founder of a group called Wheeling Water Warriors. It inspired her to organize a public event for the Wheeling community to learn more about solar options.

Mahonen says the Warrior group was created to bring attention to the issues related to hydraulic fracking practices, particularly the possible dangers to public health and the environment. But they also want to promote sustainable ideas to the community.

One of the report's authors, Aaron Sutch gave the presentation at the event, which took place at Wheeling Jesuit University. Sutch is the energy program manager at the Mountain Institute—an organization with a mission to promote economic development in mountain regions that include West Virginia and Nepal. He says solar power is a practical option to mitigate rising energy costs.

He says Wheeling, for example, gets about 80% of the solar resource that Miami does. He also points to the world leader in solar power, Germany, which has 5 times the amount of installed solar that we do in the US despite the fact that we get nearly twice as much solar resource.

“Solar is just a tremendously strong resource that is capable of being captured in a lot of different climates and WV is no exception,” Sutch says.

He says with proper policy incentives, and some public enthusiasm, solar is pretty-well set to soar in West Virginia.

“You have to remember with solar that you're actually pre-paying your electricity for as long as the system lasts,” Sutch says about investing in solar panels. “Solar is estimated to last as long as 35 years. And you're also paying for the benefit of being able to produce your own electricity, and that independence.”

As for Robin Mohonen, of the Wheeling Water Warriors? She says she and her husband Ed are jumping on the solar bandwagon as soon as possible.

“Eddie and I will be looking to put solar power on our house this late spring, early summer—as soon as the ice melts we'll get those panels up there. We're really excited

about that.”

Development Committee of Wheeling’s City Council will hear a similar presentation on March 4th, at 12:30PM. Sutch says he’ll also be speaking with community members in Morgantown scheduled for February 20th.

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