



Community  
Power  
Network

# 2013

End-of-Year Report



2013 has been a great year for Community Power Network. The following report outlines our accomplishments according to the goals we set in our proposal last year.

## Goal #1: Build a strong network of community-based renewable energy champions

In 2013 we continued in our role as a network builder, helping to put community power on the map and connecting organizations that do similar work on around the country. In 2013 we increased our membership from 59 to 107 organizations and began writing in-depth profiles of groups to highlight their accomplishments and help others replicate their successes.



Not only does our network provide organizations with resources and technical assistance, we also help to connect groups to the broader community renewable energy movement. Many of these organizations work on extremely local issues and often operate in isolation. Our success as a movement is multiplied when we help connect them to a broader community, allowing them to share resources and best practices. Our members love it when we profile their work and let the world know about their creative and innovative approaches to getting renewable energy on the grid.

### Meet some of our new members!

**Lakota Solar Enterprises (LSE)**, located on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, is one of the nation's first 100% Native American-owned and operated renewable energy companies. Founded in 2006 by Pine Ridge resident Henry Red Cloud, LSE has partnered with the nonprofit Trees, Water & People to offer renewable energy services.



**New Vision Renewable Energy** is a nonprofit in Philippi, West Virginia led by People's Chapel Church Pastor Ruston Seaman. They use DIY solar energy projects in West Virginia to educate and mobilize local citizens.



**Farmers Electric Cooperative (FEC)**, founded in 1916, provides energy to a rural region in eastern Iowa. The coop is extremely progressive and offers a number of incentives to encourage customers to develop renewable energy projects or energy efficiency measures, including a feed in tariff, energy efficiency incentives, remote real-time metering, and load controls. Warren McKenna, the general manager, has driven many of the cooperatives innovative programs and emphasis on renewable energy. According to McKenna, "If it can be done here it can be done anywhere."



**Nebraskans for Solar** is a community group working to promote economic growth through low-income solar initiatives. They work to provide individuals with the means to generate their own clean, renewable energy as a tool for community economic development and poverty mitigation.



## Goal #2: Strengthen the community-based renewable energy movement

Throughout 2013 we developed a number of critical resources to help strengthen the efficacy of our members and help new community groups get started. Our resources included toolkits, reports, compilations of existing tools, and one-on-one technical assistance. This year we developed resource guides on:

- Rural electric cooperatives
- Shared/community solar legislation
- Solarize/solar group purchase programs
- Do-it-yourself solar programs
- Utility municipalization efforts, and
- How to take your school solar

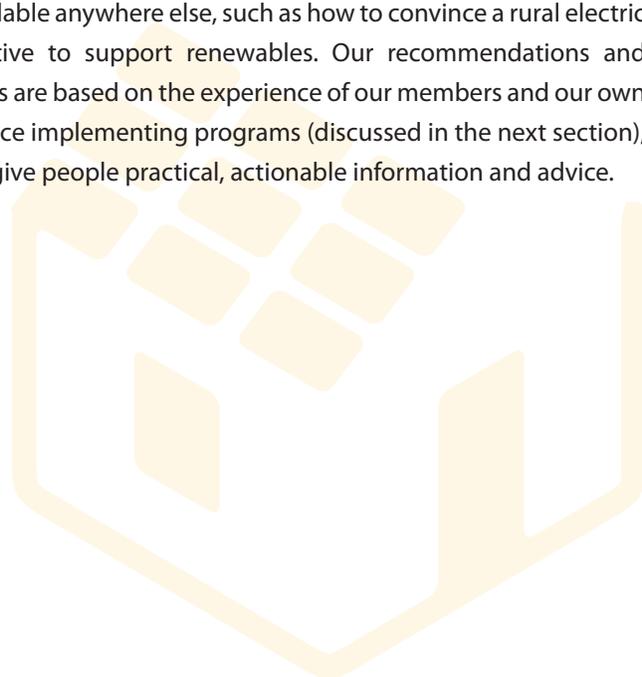


We provided technical assistance to individuals and groups starting projects or initiatives in New York, California, Arizona, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Florida, and Alabama. Throughout the year we also highlighted the work of existing groups via our weekly e-blasts to members and via in-depth profiles of specific groups.

CPN resource guides, toolkits, and one-on-one technical assistance meet a critical need in the community-based renewable energy movement. There are lots of resources out there to provide a basic introduction to renewable energy issues, or that focus on broad theories or ideas for increasing the amount of renewable energy in America. What is missing, however, are resources and guides that help individuals and groups actually develop and implement community-based renewable energy initiatives, such as organizing neighborhood solar coops or advocating for specific energy policies. We take people beyond a discussion of why renewables are important and get into the nitty-gritty of how exactly to make a project happen. Or, we do original research and put together information that

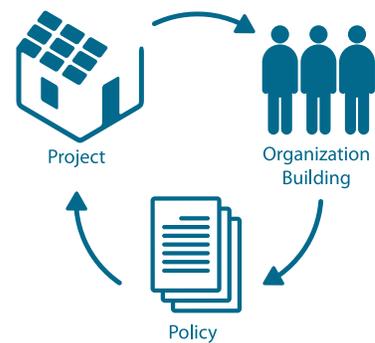


isn't available anywhere else, such as how to convince a rural electric cooperative to support renewables. Our recommendations and resources are based on the experience of our members and our own experience implementing programs (discussed in the next section), and we give people practical, actionable information and advice.



### Goal #3: Pilot, test and disseminate innovative models for community-based renewable energy projects.

In addition to our work supporting existing groups and helping citizens start new initiatives, we are also building vertically integrated programs in DC, MD, VA and WV that help to further catalyze the clean energy movement. This work is ground breaking. Our basic approach is to develop solar projects in diverse communities and to use that work as a means to organize and mobilize communities for policy reform. We then document our results and share information and lessons learned with our broader network. This magnifies our impact and helps to spur further development of community-based renewable energy projects and organizations across the country.



In 2013 we formally launched programs in MD, VA, and WV, in addition to expanding our work in DC. In VA and WV we fundraised \$92k and brought on a dedicated staff person to develop and manage the program. In MD we brought in \$110k and also hired a dedicated staff person to manage the MD program. In DC we've launched an extremely successful bulk purchase program and are beginning to generate income via a fee-for-service model. Specific program accomplishments include the following.

#### Washington, DC

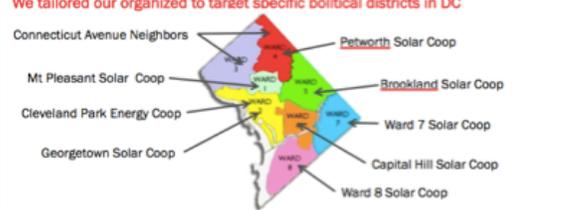
In DC we are using an iterative model, where we develop projects, organize citizens, and then reform policy. Using this model we have successfully built one of the strongest solar markets in the country and transformed our elected officials from skeptics to strong renewable energy policy supporters. Successes in 2013 include:



- Passing legislation to enable shared/community solar projects in Washington, DC, the culmination of a three year effort. This legislation dramatically opens up the market to allow renters, condo dwellers, and low-income individuals, and allows anyone located in the District to benefit from solar.
- Launching seven different neighborhood solar bulk purchase/solarize programs to help scale-up residential solar adoption. Although the programs are ongoing we've had over 450 residents sign up for a solar site visit and help nearly 100 homes go solar. The bulk purchase programs will soon become self-sufficient via our fee-for-service model.
- Developing and publishing an easy-to-use website full of resources for DC residents interested in going solar or supporting solar policies.
- Initiating discussions with District government and key stakeholders on the importance of a low-income solar incentive program.
- Beginning to assist DC residents to develop community solar projects under the new community/shared solar legislation.

**POLICY**

Why were we able to pass so much legislation?  
 We tailored our organized to target specific political districts in DC



Once we established a solar coop in each ward, the DC Council was strongly pro-solar

## Virginia and West Virginia

Since beginning our program in July 2013 we have developed a number of new project models, worked in extremely conservative political environments, and successfully developed ground breaking new projects in low-income urban and rural communities. We are building new constituencies for policy reform and throwing monkey wrenches into the rural/conservative pro-coal, anti climate change policy framework. When elected officials find that their constituents—even very conservative ones—are strongly in favor of renewable energy, they feel they must respond. Successes in 2013 include:



- Developing an innovative financing approach that will allow a WV church to go solar for no money upfront and earn back the cost of the project in less than 10 years. The financing approach is extremely unique and combines low-cost loans, competitive bidding, and the creation of a new incentive program using “frequency regulation” on the PJM grid. By incorporating the frequency regulation component, we will increase the carbon impact of the project by 500% and engage parishioners in the project.
- Developing an 8 KW project on an affordable housing complex in WV that uses innovative financing models and create local job-training opportunities. A local volunteer solar barn-raising organization will provide installation instruction and project leadership to train a team of individuals assembled from a local job training program to complete the installation.
- Working with VA’s Habitat for Humanity to develop a pilot program to incorporate solar systems into all new home construction. We completed a financial analysis demonstrating that, within Habitat’s current project financing structure, solar will save families more than 40% on their electricity bills from say 1. That’s even after incorporating the additional mortgage payments to cover the cost of the solar panels. Once the pilot program is complete we will work with Habitat to incorporate solar into all new construction moving forward.
- Working with the WV Council of Churches to deploy a series of solar battery-backup systems at food pantries in six counties. These backup systems will allow the pantries to continue to operate during power outages and emergencies, such as the 2012 derecho that left many communities without power for three weeks. The food banks had lost thousands of dollars in food and medicines during the “derecho” and subsequently gotten a grant to buy diesel generators for future emergencies. We convinced them that solar would provide a better economic return and greater security.
- Advocating for policies in WV that would allow municipalities to indirectly access solar tax credits, reducing the cost of solar for municipalities and incentivizing solar in the state.
- Partnering with Community Housing Partners in Blacksburg, VA to launch a new Solarize Blacksburg campaign in January. We are also working with the Richmond Regional Energy Alliance on developing a counterpart Solarize Richmond for later in 2014.
- Developing a white paper on the structure of WV’s net metering policies and how the Public Service Commission should reform the policies to better support solar development.



## Maryland

In MD in 2013 we focused on community owned solar. This year we are focused on developing and publicizing solar projects and programs in low-income communities in Baltimore and on the Eastern Shore. This is a strategic approach that allows us to not only benefit low-income communities (communities that will be most impacted by climate change and rising energy prices), but to create solar supporters among policy makers that are historically lukewarm on any policy issue related to climate change.



- Initiating community-owned solar projects to be installed on an urban farm and volunteer fire department.

- Organizing solar stakeholders to prepare, introduce, and pass community energy generating facilities legislation that would allow community/shared solar projects. This legislation would provide solar energy opportunities to a whole new group of residents previously unable to go solar. We worked with a group of solar stakeholders to organize education and outreach effort on the issue of community solar, provide briefings and background information on community solar, organize community meetings, and assemble expert panels that testified before both House and Senate Committees on the issue. Our coalition included environmental groups, private citizens, and solar industry leaders, including the Climate Coalition and CCAN. Although the bill lost by a single vote in the Senate Finance Committee, we have developed the infrastructure and connections to launch a stronger policy push in 2014.



- Preparing two half-day workshops on state-of-the-art solar and roofing technologies that may allow Baltimore to install solar on its huge supply of low-sloped row house roofs. This will allow the city to meet its very large Climate Action Plan goals.

- Assisting the Baltimore South East Community Development Corporation's (SE-CDC) plans to develop solar on a group of row houses on Baltimore's East side as part one of the city's inner city storm water management projects.

- Exploring options for financial securities and community solar by engaging with the Maryland Securities Commissioner about granting an exemption for the community financing project model. This would allow for substantially larger numbers of investors in community-financed projects and would reduce advertising restrictions.



- Providing public presentations on solar at the Maryland Municipal League Conference, Solarize Frederick, Howard County Beyond Fossil Fuel Conference, Bethesda Green Energy Expo, Green Party State Assembly meeting, University of Maryland Sustainability Office, and Maryland Energy Administration.

- Conducting extensive online outreach to promote solar energy, including developing the MD-SUN website, Facebook page, and listserv with information on solar for Maryland residents.

- Beginning conversations with key stakeholders on developing solar projects and programs in low-income communities in Baltimore and on the Eastern Shore. This work will include demonstration projects, creative financing models, and integrating solar into existing low-income programs (such as roof replacement or heating programs).



Our unique cross-cutting approach in each of these states is that we not only develop these projects, but document our results and share information and lessons learned with our broader network. This magnifies our impact and helps spur further development of community-based renewable energy projects and organizations across the country.

#### **Goal #4: Connect solar supporters and advocates to build a new, broad constituency of renewable energy champions**

We use our state networks to not only develop and test project models, but also to build broad bases of citizen support for renewables. This support can be then be translated into the ability to create policy change, further magnifying the impact of our state-level efforts.

In 2012 we established statewide solar networks in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. In 2013 we continued to build out our state-level listserves and networks, scaling up our reach in each state.



We also partnered with the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) to launch Solar Citizen, a national campaign with 50k subscribers designed to educate and mobilize average citizens on key solar policy issues. We worked with ASES for four months at the beginning of 2013 and issued bi-weekly e-newsletters on a variety of topics. Our emails averaged a 20% open rate (very high for these types of



initiatives) and were very popular among the target audience as a means to both learn about solar issues AND

take action. Unfortunately, ASES ran into significant financial trouble and did not have the funds to continue to program past May 2013. We are currently looking for new partners to work with to launch a nation-wide “Energy Citizen” effort that will build on our successes from Solar Citizen and expand our scope to other renewable energy technologies. We envision “Energy Citizen” as a tool that can be deployed by organizations around the country as they fight key solar policy battles in critical states, particularly in states battling ALEC and other organizations attempting to dismantle solar legislation.

We also supported the work of our members throughout the year by hosting petitions and fundraising appeals on our website, as well as by promoting their petitions to our larger CPN audience. In 2013 we hosted six petitions on behalf of individuals in VA, MD, MA, MD, FL and AL.

## Goal #5: Develop new partnerships that further the mission of Community Power Network

In 2013 we developed a number of strong partnerships with organizations in the community renewable energy space. In the beginning of the year we worked with ASES on our Solar Citizen campaign, and continue to explore partnerships with other organizations as we look to launch our own “Energy Citizen” campaign. We partnered with the Sierra Club on DC’s community solar legislation and we collaborated closely with Vote Solar, Maryland DC Virginia Solar Energy Association (MDVSEIA), the National Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA), the Distributed Wind Energy Association (DWEA), The MD Climate Coalition, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, the WV Council of Churches, Coalfields Development Corporation of Virginia and many other organizations.



This year we also began working with Organizing for America (OFA), to develop a solar toolkit and train their members to develop and implement solar projects in their communities. We currently provide technical assistance to their efforts through webinars and direct technical assistance to their solar raising initiative.



Throughout the year we’ve also worked closely with a number of groups, including The Solar Foundation and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to develop and launch the National Solar Schools Consortium. Made up of organizations that promote solar for schools or as an educational tool, the Consortium is a clearinghouse for information and tools for educators and administrators interested in incorporating solar into their curriculum or installing solar on their buildings. CPN convened the 10 founding organizations, helped the group develop a core mission, and is currently supporting the Consortiums efforts to launch this spring in conjunction with a number of national educational conferences.

As part of our work in DC, we’ve partnered with the World Wildlife Fund and University of Maryland to organize solar bulk purchase programs for their members, staff, and broader community. These partnerships have been a unique opportunity for CPN to build name recognition in the community and demonstrate our ability to implement successful bulk purchase programs.

## Plans for 2014

*In the coming year we plan to continue to grow Community Power Network and expand our support to new and existing groups.*

## Goal #1: Build a strong network of community-based renewable energy champions

*This year we plan to:*

- Continue to grow our network of community renewable energy champions.
- Strengthen our network to allow groups to better connect with one another and share resources and support.
- Helping advocacy groups plan and implement strategic projects as a means to create policy reform.
- Use the our grassroots initiatives, such as “Energy Citizen” to strengthen policy advocacy efforts across the movement, since many of our groups are largely project focused at the moment.



## Goal #2: Strengthen the community-based renewable energy movement

### *This year we plan to:*

- Develop and deploy more advocacy tools, such as petitions and fundraising pages, based on feedback from our members.
- Continue to develop reports and resource guides on new models and approaches in the sector, such as community biofuels and shared/community solar.

## Goal #3: Pilot and test innovative models for community-based renewable energy projects

### *Plans for 2014 include:*

- Continue to scale up our bulk purchase efforts in the mid Atlantic region and attempt to saturate the market.
- Continue to develop low-income solar projects in DC, VA, WV, and MD, using innovative financing models.
- Continue to help MD, VA, WV groups deploy some specific demonstration projects in strategic areas, as a means to organize citizen support for renewable technologies.



## Goal #4: Connect solar supporters and advocates to build a new, broad constituency of renewable energy champions

### *This year we plan to:*

- Deepen and expand our networks in VA, WV, MD, and DC, in order to further develop grassroots support for solar in these states,
- Explore expanding our statewide solar networks to three to five more states. Depending on funding opportunities these could include Pennsylvania, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, or Georgia.

## Goal #5: Develop new partnerships that further the mission of Community Power Network

### *In 2014 we plan to:*

- Continue exploring other partnership opportunities to strengthen and scale our impact.
- Connect with non-profit low-income housing development organizations, which are a key opportunity.
- Strengthen our relationships with rural development organizations.
- Develop partnerships with specific solar companies and industry leaders, as a means to reach new and existing solar consumers and advocates.