

# WHEN REALITY SMACKS YOU IN THE FACE: MORE RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR US NAVY

Our friends over at the energy journal FuelFix.com are reporting little more than gloom and doom in the US oil and gas industry, as drilling companies slash payrolls in a desperate attempt to ratchet down the current freefall in prices.

Meanwhile, over in the renewable energy field things are steamrolling ahead. The latest example comes from the US Navy, which has announced that it will invest in up to 200 megawatts of solar energy and other renewables for its east coast installations.

Before we get into that, let's clarify that renewables are steamrolling ahead wherever the field is free of political obstacles. In Ohio, for example, the once-promising wind industry has 11 approved and **shovel-ready wind projects** that are now adrift in the doldrums thanks to new "**drop dead**" laws passed by the Republican-dominated legislature this year.



Transportable renewable energy is also part of the US Navy's clean energy future (photo cropped, courtesy of US Navy).

## **More Renewable Energy for the US Navy**

But enough of that bad news. Let's gear up for the New Year with the Navy's latest contribution to the US clean energy future.

Earlier this month, the Navy announced a **renewable energy plan** for seven installations in the Washington, D.C. area, including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Washington Navy Yard, and the Naval Academy, Observatory, and Maritime Intelligence Center.

Also included in **the renewable energy package** are four installations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Illinois.

Here's the attraction of renewable energy as stated by the head of the Navy's Renewable Energy Program Office:

*The Department of the Navy has been aggressively pursuing cost-effective renewable energy that will provide long-term price stability and power diversity...Strategically placed renewable energy can create reliable access to energy for DON installations and provide a myriad of benefits to the surrounding communities.*

That thing about benefiting the surrounding communities is not just an add-on, by the way. If you've been reading up on your US military clean tech news, you know that community stewardship is part and parcel of military sustainability (for more on that, see our recent interview with Rebecca Rubin, CEO of the **sustainability consulting firm** Marstel-Day).



Solar panels at Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command Headquarters (U.S. Navy photo by Rick Naystatt).

## **Another Wake-Up Call for Energy Companies**

That thing about price stability is also a key item. In today's sequestration-guided federal budget environment, when energy prices are high the military cuts back on training and readiness. So what if prices are low now, history has shown that what goes down will eventually go back up.

Electricity generated by solar, wind or geothermal offers a more solid fiscal footing, since once the equipment is up and running the fuel is virtually free.

Consumers have been getting the message about prices as well as community benefits. According to the latest **Pew energy poll** (h/t to [fuelfix.com](http://fuelfix.com)), **Americans favor alternative energy** by a whopping 60 percent to 30 percent margin.

Speaking of Republicans, that figure includes self-identified Republicans, which is the only demographic group in the survey to favor fossil energy over renewables.

Did I say Republicans too many times in this article?

Where was I? Oh, right. Utility companies such as **Duke Energy** have been taking that message to heart and are rapidly increasing their renewable energy portfolios, as chronicled endlessly here at CleanTechnica and our sister site PlanetSave.

As for energy extraction companies, earlier this week we made the point that energy is fungible. If you think of energy to the energy industry as mobility to the auto industry, you can see why the reality is that the transition to a more safe and sustainable business model can be painful, it is doable.

Some extraction companies are doing it faster than others. For example Chevron (yes, **that Chevron**) is heavily invested in solar energy, and **Saudi Aramco** is busily transitioning its host nation's domestic energy profile into renewables.

On the other side of the coin, there are still plenty of fossil-invested companies that don't seem to be interested in any kind of transition at all, and that have been aggressively lobbying against renewables.

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