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October 17, 2011

U.S. Solar Jobs Census Finds Solar Employment Soars As U.S. Economy Lags
Solar Jobs Growing Nearly 10 Times Faster Than Employment as a Whole

DALLAS – The Solar Foundation, a nonprofit solar education and research organization, today released its second annual review of the solar workforce in the United States. The report, titled, “*National Solar Jobs Census 2011: A Review of the U.S. Solar Workforce*” found that hiring in the solar workforce is on the rise. More than 100,000 Americans are now employed in the solar industry.

“The solar industry has grown into a major economic force with more than 100,000 employees in the United States,” said Andrea Luecke, executive director of The Solar Foundation. “We expect even greater growth in the foreseeable future. But policymakers, workforce training providers, and the industry must work together to continue creating good jobs for skilled workers.”

As of August 2011, the National Solar Jobs Census 2011 identified more than 17,198 solar employment sites and 100,237 solar jobs in all 50 states. The solar industry’s job growth rate of 6.8 percent is significantly higher than the 2 percent net job loss in fossil fuel power generation and the economy-wide expectation of 0.7 percent growth over the same period.

At the state level, California continued to be the national leader in solar employment, with 25,575 workers. Rounding out the top 10 states are Colorado, Arizona, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Texas, Oregon, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Colorado, Arizona, Florida, Oregon, New Jersey and Massachusetts showed the strongest growth rates from August 2010.

“States like Colorado see solar as one of the cornerstones for our economy now and into the future,” said Wendy Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer of the Aurora Economic Development Council in Colorado. “Both GE Solar’s announcement to locate their new \$300 million solar manufacturing plant in Aurora (which will create 355 new direct solar jobs) *and* the results of the National Solar Jobs Census show that Colorado’s investment in the solar industry is paying off in good jobs for skilled workers. It is important that we continue to promote this job-generating industry both at the state and federal level.”

The National Solar Jobs Census 2011 also found that solar employers expect to increase the number of solar workers by 24 percent, representing nearly 24,000 net new jobs by August 2012. Over the next 12 months, nearly half of solar firms expect to add jobs.

“These survey responses merely reflect employers’ best estimates at expected new hiring, but it demonstrates a clear growth pattern for the industry and tremendous optimism by

employers in the industry,” said Luecke. “Employers expressed similar optimism last year, but failed to meet their hiring expectations because of stalled legislative initiatives and continued policy uncertainty.”

The survey examined employment along the solar value chain, including installation, wholesale trade, manufacturing, utilities and all other fields and includes growth rates and job numbers for 31 separate occupations. The report included data from more than 2,100 solar company survey respondents. The National Solar Jobs Census 2011 was conducted by The Solar Foundation and BW Research Partnership’s Green LMI Consulting division with technical assistance from Cornell University.

“The National Solar Jobs Census is an important reference because the previous lack of data about solar employment was presenting difficulties to policymakers and training providers,” said Philip Jordan, Chief Business Officer at BW Research Partnership. “The Solar Foundation is helping to fill that gap with solid research that allows us to draw important conclusions about the solar industry with a high degree of confidence, while giving training providers, job seekers, and the general public the critical information they need to understand the solar labor market.”

“The jobs census is setting a new standard for clean energy job studies. By using high-quality research methodology, we can ensure that these numbers are as accurate as possible,” said John Bunge, Associate Professor in the Department of Statistical Science at Cornell University’s School of Industrial Labor Relations. “The use of both primary and secondary data sources, along with careful statistical analysis, gives us high confidence in the results. We expect our rigorous methodology to be extended to econometric studies of green jobs beyond the solar industry.”

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Background Materials:

National Solar Jobs Census 2011: <http://thesolarfoundation.org/research/national-solar-jobs-census-2011>

National Solar Jobs Census 2010: <http://thesolarfoundation.org/research/national-solar-jobs-census>

About The Solar Foundation:

The Solar Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, non-lobbying organization founded in 1977 that strives to increase the widespread adoption of solar energy through educational outreach, policy research, and market transformation. Read more at www.TheSolarFoundation.org.

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