

Green-Collar Jobs Require New Skills

Adapted from an article
by Pam Kasey at
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The blue-collar jobs that have long supported a strong American middle class, electricians, plumbers, transportation, and manufacturing workers of all kinds, are getting a green update.

It's a nationwide movement to refresh the traditional trades with training in 21st century knowledge and skills. The green-collar movement advances new, environmental technologies by training the workforce that can manufacture, install, and maintain them.

Green-collar advocates point out these jobs are inherently local. For example, upgrades to a building's energy efficiency cannot be installed overseas. What is especially hopeful about the movement is it insists on family-sustaining wages and upward mobility.

Whose collar is green? A narrow application of the green-collar concept focuses on jobs in new energy technologies. The Green Jobs Act of 2007 authorized \$125 million per year to create a pilot Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Worker Training Program.

These industries represented more than 8.5 million jobs in the U.S. in 2006, according to a 2007 report from the American Solar Energy Society. With moderately-supportive policies in place, the society forecasts 20 million more could be created by 2030.

In West Virginia, one thinks of the eight employees at FPL (Florida Power and Light) Energy's Mountaineer Wind Energy Center in Tucker County, installers of geo-thermal heating systems, and workers providing energy audits for homes and businesses across the state. A larger definition includes areas that benefit the envi-

ronment more broadly, such as jobs in: recycling, stormwater management, acid mine drainage, and other water quality remediation.

The national groups that promote the concept, the Apollo Alliance, Green for All, and The Workforce Alliance, to name a few, use a definition that includes all of that, while emphasizing the foundation in traditional blue-collar skills.

"Retrofitting American cities for example, requires not *green construction workers* but rather, workers with traditional construction skills who also have up-to-date training on energy-efficient construction," reads *Greener Pathways*, a recent report from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy. "The new energy economy will create some brand new industries and many brand new jobs. But even more of it will involve transforming the industries and jobs we already have."

"We need all the forms of energy that we can develop right now to be secure of foreign governments or natural catastrophes such as hurricanes," said Nicholas "Corky" DeMarco, executive director of the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association. He pointed to projections from the Interstate Oil and Gas Commission showing energy demand will increase dramatically, energy from **all** sources.

"I don't look at that as threatening at all," said West Virginia Coal Association President Bill Raney. "We need all sources to satisfy the energy appetite of this country." Development of new, non-fossil sources requires a trained workforce.

Many states and cities across the nation have committed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards in government buildings.

West Virginia's green-collar workforce is in the early stages of development. "I don't know how much of that's going on in the state of West Virginia," said Ron Radcliff, director of the Governor's Workforce Investment Division. "People in need of updated training, veterans, at-risk youth, we serve all these populations," Radcliff said.

Workers displaced through changes brought about by national energy and environmental policy are listed first among those targeted for retraining.

Focus On OWWA



The Ohio Water Well Association (OWWA) will again hold its convention at the Roberts Convention Centre in Wilmington, Ohio, November 11-12.

Tuesday is education day, with seminars offered on a wide variety of topics. Exhibits open at 4:00 p.m. Later, the evening begins with a reception, followed by the annual banquet. Be sure to stick around for fun and games at the after-dinner party.

Wednesday has a final seminar in the morning, followed by more exhibits. A silent auction will begin at 11:30 a.m. This year **WWDR** will be there. Come join us!

The OWWA can trace its beginnings to the 1930s. It is dedicated to promoting the wise use and protection of Ohio's groundwater resources for present and future generations. One of OWWA's main objectives is to maintain open dialogue with key regulatory agencies. Members include water well drillers, pump installers, manufacturers and suppliers of water system products, geologists, engineers, regulators, and others interested in the development and protection of Ohio's groundwater resources.

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