

News from Savannah River National Laboratory

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DOE SunShot Grant Awarded to SRNL for Solar Power Initiatives

AIKEN, S.C. (November 24, 2015) – Over the next five years, South Carolina has a very daunting, but exciting task ahead. A new state law requires greater dependence on solar energy. In order to meet that reform, the number of privately installed solar electricity generators needs to increase from less than 500 statewide to approximately 10,000. In support of this effort, the Savannah River National Laboratory has received a three-year, \$1.5 million Department of Energy SunShot grant to support the reduction in so-called “soft costs” associated with the solar energy.

South Carolina currently has one of the highest expense rates in the nation associated with solar energy. “Current soft costs in SC are projected to be at least 25 percent higher than the rest of the nation,” explained SRNL Principal Engineer Dr. Elise Fox. “Soft costs are any non-hardware costs, or costs related to labor, taxation, overhead, permitting, and financing. We are trying to reduce those costs to the averages seen nationwide in order to help solar achieve grid parity. Over the course of the next five years, the installed solar capacity in South Carolina will mushroom from less than 20 MW to more than 300 MW.”



Solar panels in use at the Savannah River National Laboratory



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SRNL will lead a team of industry partners in spreading the word on solar energy, influencing policy to encourage solar generation, and even educating a workforce so that it is prepared for installation and maintenance of solar technology. The project team includes: SRNL, Duke Energy, South Carolina Electric and Gas, Central Electric Cooperative, Santee Cooper, SC Office of Regulatory Staff Energy Office, North Carolina Clean Energy Technology Center, SC Solar Council, Solar Business Alliance, Coastal Conservation League, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

“We will help develop training programs for certified installers, make recommendations on cost reduction strategies and help implement them, and we will help educate the public on what the new law means and how they can participate,” explained Dr. Fox. “The cost of solar is much higher in SC than the rest of the nation, in part because this is an emerging area for us. For example, the permitting process is often unclear and varies widely across the state. We will be working to provide recommendations to municipalities on current best practices and offer assistance to help them streamline their permitting processes for solar. Our primary goal is to close the gap between South Carolina installed costs of residential rooftop solar and national averages. The secondary goal is to develop a portable and replicable model that can be used in other states, particularly in the Southeast and rural areas.”

The DOE SunShot Initiative is a national collaborative effort to make solar energy cost-competitive with other forms of electricity by the end of the decade. The SunShot Initiative drives research, manufacturing, and market solutions to make the abundant solar energy resources in the United States more affordable and accessible for Americans.

The Savannah River National Laboratory is a multi-program applied research and development laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy. SRNL applies state-of-the-art science and engineering to provide practical, high-value, cost-effective solutions for our nation’s environmental cleanup, nuclear security and clean energy challenges. For more information, visit <http://srnl.doe.gov>.

http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120_2013-2014/bills/1189.htm

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The Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) is a multi-program applied research and development laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy. SRNL applies state-of-the-art science and engineering to provide practical, high-value, cost-effective solutions for our nation’s environmental cleanup, nuclear security and clean energy challenges. Visit us on the web at <http://srnl.doe.gov>