

'Green-collar' jobs ruffled by recession, but may rebound

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"Green-collar" hiring took a hit during the current recession, but may accelerate beyond its 1998-2007 growth rate of about 9 percent a year -- more than double the 3.7 percent growth rate for traditional jobs.

That's the word from experts participating in the Pew Charitable Trusts' new Clean Energy Economy study, billed as the U.S.'s first state-by-state survey of green-collar jobs.

By 2007, the most recent year data is available, more than 68,200 businesses across all 50 states and the District of Columbia accounted for about 770,000 jobs relating to clean energy. By comparison, fossil-fuel sector jobs in utilities, coal mining and oil and gas extraction had 1.27 million workers in 2007.

California led the U.S. with about 124,000 green-collar jobs in 2007, followed by Texas with 56,000.

With policymakers churning out fresh legislation -- including the \$787 billion economic stimulus bill, along with upcoming renewable electricity standards and possible measures to cap [carbon-dioxide emissions](#) -- green-collar advocates hope for more job creation in the near future even as the economy struggles.

"With all the emphasis in the stimulus and energy bills, there's going to be new demand and a lot more investment in these businesses, which will mean more jobs," said Joel Yudken, principal of High Road Strategies

and a member of an advisory panel for the Pew study. "It's a growth area, there's no question about that."

Besides government stimulus, venture capitalists have pumped about \$12.6 billion into the category during the past three years. But investments in clean technology fell 48 percent in the first three months of 2009 compared with a year earlier, while total venture capital across all sectors dropped 61 percent.

Lori Grange, a senior officer for Pew's Center on the States, said the group launched the study after tracking more activity by state and national policymakers to use green-collar jobs to grow their way out of the current recession through tax credits, renewable energy standards and loan guarantees.

"Because we lack the hard data for 2008 and 2009, it's impossible to say how green-collar jobs are doing," she said. "But given the broad jobs numbers, we expect the clean-tech sector wasn't immune to job losses. But based on experts we don't think the sector got hit as hard. We can't know that for certain until the numbers come out."

In Tennessee, for example, the state is rolling out a new solar-power initiative, which could create jobs despite the recession, she said. Pennsylvania also is rolling out initiatives to expand biodiesel production.

"Pennsylvania is an example of a state that was hard-hit even before the recession, but policymakers see the [clean-energy](#) sector as a way out and a path forward," Grange said.

Pew counted actual jobs, companies and investments in every state and the District of Columbia aimed at developing clean, renewable sources of energy as well as increasing efficiency, reducing greenhouse-gas

emissions that cause global warming and conserving water and other natural resources.

David Prend, managing general partner for Rockport Capital Partners and a participant in the Pew study, said his venture-capital firm has invested in Solyndra, a California-based solar-panel maker getting ready to build a new plant and hire workers.

The company's solar panels use a system of tubes and fluids that bend and concentrate solar power at any angle, thereby eliminating the need for expensive racks to point them at the sun.

"You lay these things on feet that we give you and the biggest value proposition is that it's about \$1 a watt cheaper to install since you don't have to buy aluminum racks and you don't have to screw them to a roof. You just lay them down," he said.

The company is ramping up production of its 110-megawatt plant and plans to build a second plant that could generate 1,000 permanent jobs, he said.

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