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Solar's Dirty Little Secrets...



By Randy Velker

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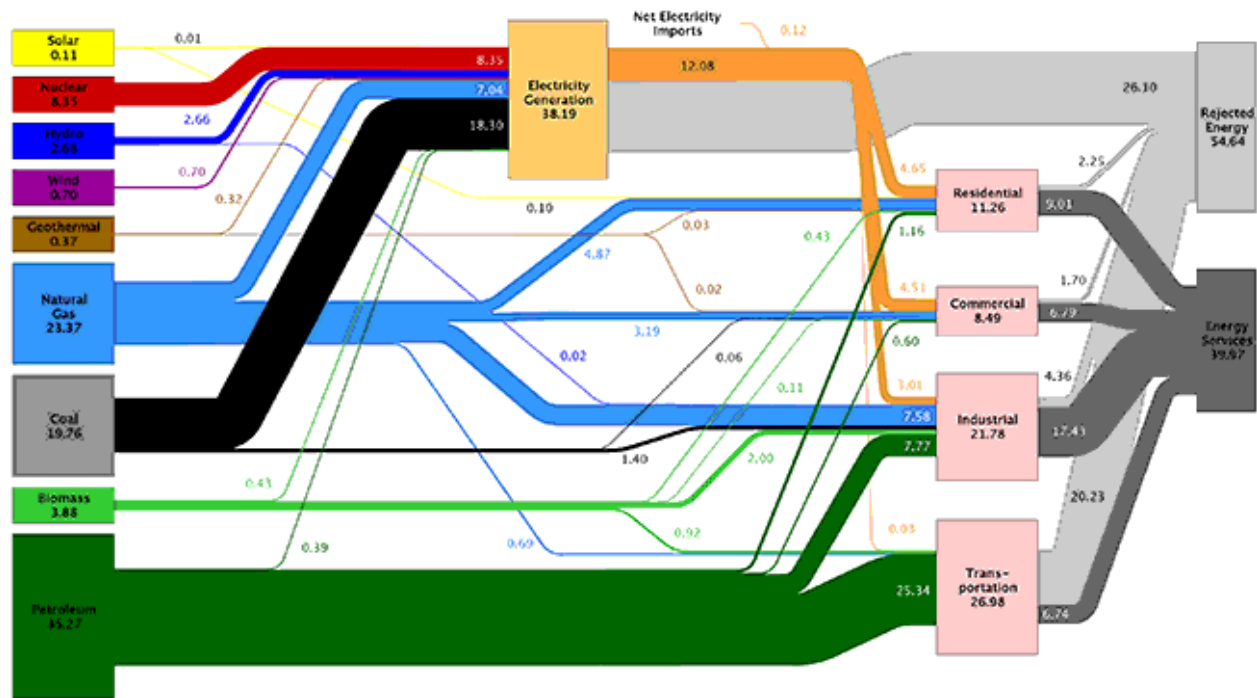
Dirty Little Secret #4

DLS4- The amount of Solar Energy used is Miniscule

Looking at the total energy mix of last year (2009) we can see that solar energy, though it is growing in popularity is still not being used very much.

We are hearing and seeing about large systems being installed and friends are installing systems, but they are still far from mainstream!

The real numbers (from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory) are that of all the energy produced in the United States [solar energy](#) is producing 11% of 1%. Almost nothing! The category is almost too small to even count (in comparison to many of the other energy sources). We can see real progress in that in 2008 solar energy accounted for only 9% of 1% of the energy used.



2009 Energy Usage

This is not really a “dirty little secret”, but should be a clarion call to action for those of us interested in renewable energy. Why is it so small? We are looking at the solar industry growing by 100% per year, but we are still talking about only a small amount of solar energy being produced by [solar systems](#). Even if the industry doubles in size for the foreseeable future, there will still be a long way to go before solar energy is even considered a “minor” player in the energy mix of the United States because we are starting from such a small beginning number.

This is not meant to discourage anyone, it is just taking a clear inventory of where we are now, so that we can realistically plan for improvement!

Next Steps:

Once we realize that [photovoltaic solar system](#) energy is a free energy source (once the original equipment has been purchased and installed) we understand how hard it is to compare this clean energy with other types of energy. All other fossil energy sources are using some type of fuel (which must be purchased in some way). These energy sources use fuel which is subject to the laws of supply and demand- which means they will get more expensive the more scarce they become. It is almost a wild guess to predict the price of coal, gasoline or natural gas in fifteen to twenty years.

In twenty years the price of sunshine will still be the same- yours for the taking!

Solar energy prices are falling and will continue to fall- probably at the same rate that fossil fuels will rise in expense. The only real question is whether NOW is the time to begin using solar energy. For sure it will be soon, possibly it is NOW. The only way to know for sure is to begin to do some research on the incentives and rebates that are currently offered in your state, county, city, etc. You can find a list of those rebates and incentives at <http://www.dsireusa.org>.

The next logical step is to get a quote for a [photovoltaic system](#). The cost might still shock you, but you can now more realistically be able to compare apples with apples. You can realize that comparing renewable

energy with fossil energy is an apple to oranges comparison.

Cost in the short term will probably favor fossil fuels (because all of it's infrastructure and systems are already in place and existing). Cost in the long term will definitely favor renewable energy (because the fuel is free and your total energy cost for the next 30-50 years is already paid for in “cheap” 2010 dollars).

The future belongs to renewable energies. Now is the time to take a closer look!

About the Author



Randy Velker is a [solar designer](#) and installer in Middle Tennessee. He is the owner of Simple Energy Works LLC which plans, designs and installs [commercial photovoltaic systems](#) and [residential solar systems](#). They are also pioneering PV leasing in Tennessee. He lives in Crossville with his wife and seven children, and they use electricity produced by their Grid-Tied Photovoltaic solar system. They also track all of their energy usage using the Current Cost Envi real time energy monitor.

He is interested in renewable energy and “Green” technologies only when they make sense (financially, environmentally, etc.) - and not a moment before!

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