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Solar Pricing Better than ever for PA Consumers, among findings in PA DEP Solar Rebate Data

July 25, 2014, Kutztown, PA Homeowners and small businesses pay less now for solar electric systems than they did while the state was paying rebates, even at the highest level of solar rebates, according to a recent report by the nonprofit Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Association (MAREA).

Based on an analysis of data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as part of the state's [Sunshine Rebate Program](#), the study finds costs to homeowners dropped 28 percent, or \$2/watt, from the beginning of the rebate program in 2009 until it ended in 2013. The small business sector experienced an even greater drop of 40 percent.

The price-per-watt (\$/W) is a way to compare the costs of solar electricity. It is calculated by dividing the total project cost by the total watt rating (sum of all solar modules). In Pennsylvania, a 10,000 Watt (10 kW) system will produce about 12,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity per year.

Vera Cole, president of MAREA and principal investigator, adds "Solar pricing is better than ever for consumers in Pennsylvania, even in a post-rebate world. Lower component prices and a maturing industry have led to significant cost reductions. And, the 30 percent federal tax credit for homeowner remains in effect until the end of 2016."

The report, "PA Sunshine Counts, Our Common Solar Wealth," analyzes records obtained from the PA DEP through the state's [Right to Know Act](#) for more than 7,000 solar electric systems receiving PA Sunshine Rebates. Other findings from this data include:

- The average residential system size is 7.7 kW. Most residential systems (74 percent) are smaller than 10 kW and nearly all residential systems (99.8 percent) are smaller than 30 kW. The total installed capacity of the rebate-supported systems is 98,033 kW or enough to power about 12,000 homes.
- Of the 67 counties in PA, 64 have at least one installation that received a PA Sunshine Rebate. Yet, 56 percent of all installations occurred in the 10-county area of southeast Pennsylvania: Lancaster, Chester, Montgomery, Berks, Bucks, Lehigh, Northampton, Delaware, Schuylkill and Philadelphia.
- Of the 362 installers participating in the rebate program, seven were responsible for nearly a third of all installations and 27 percent of rebate monies. On the other hand, more than a quarter of the installers (95) completed only one system that received a rebate.
- The average small business system size is 58.6 kW, with 41 percent smaller than 25 kW and 18 percent larger than 100 kW.
- One manufacturer, SMA America, supplied almost half (42 percent) of all string inverters installed.
- Photovoltaic modules were sourced from 89 different manufacturers. The most widely installed modules were from Schuco USA, followed closely by Suntech Power, Sharp and SolarWorld. Modules from six suppliers made up 52.4% of installed capacity.

Bill Hennessy, vice president of MAREA and a solar installer, commented, "This is a fascinating look at the results of a public investment in clean energy. Having more solar on the grid benefits us all, by

reducing demand for high cost power on sunny summer days. The cost of fuel for solar is always the same—nothing—an everyday no price."

The full report, "PA Sunshine Counts, Our Common Solar Wealth" is available for download from MAREA. For free copy, please visit www.themarea.org.

For more information on the Right to Know case, see [Commonwealth Department of Environmental Protection v. Cole](#).

The [Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Association](#) is a 501(c) 3 non-profit dedicated to informing and educating the public on renewable energy production, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through meetings, workshops, educational materials and energy fairs.