

# **Final Report**

## **Online National Solar Energy Directory and 2005 Solar Decathlon Product Directory**

### **Background**

The Solar Electric Power Association (SEPA), in partnership with the American Solar Energy Society, developed an online National Solar Energy Directory with clear, comprehensive information on suppliers and purchasing options. The site was originally located at FindSolar.com, but has recently been moved to Find-Solar.org. The original FindSolar.com domain name has been taken by the American Solar Energy Society (a partner in this project) and utilized for a similar but different project.

This Find-Solar.org directory offers the rapidly growing base of potential solar customers a simple, straightforward destination to learn about their solar options. Members of the public are able to easily locate contractors in their geographic area and verify companies' qualifications with accurate third-party information. It allows consumers to obtain key information on the economics, incentives, desirability, and workings of a solar energy system, as well as competing quotes from different contractors and reviews from customers they have worked with previously. Find-Solar.org is a means of facilitating the growing public interest in solar power and overcoming a major barrier to widespread development of U.S. solar markets.

In addition to the development of Find-Solar.org, SEPA developed a separate online product directory for the 2005 DOE Solar Decathlon to facilitate the communication of information about the energy efficiency and renewable energy products used in each university team's home.

### **Program Objectives**

#### **Online National Solar Energy Directory**

The objectives of this element of the project were to provide the general public with the following information capabilities:

- A one-stop directory of contractors capable of serving a customer with a verified summary of their qualifications and certifications.
- A one-stop directory of solar resources, including links to solar manufacturers, state resources, etc.
- A simple means of calculating the approximate economics of a customer-sited solar system.
- Information about available state and federal incentives.
- Customer-targeted answers to frequently asked questions about onsite solar.

#### **2005 Solar Decathlon Product Directory**

The objective of this element of the project was to provide attendees of the Solar Decathlon with the following information:

- Product manufacturers, vendors and model numbers.
- A listing of solar manufacturers and vendors at the Solar Power 2005 Expo who are available to talk with them about their interest in purchasing solar for their home or business.

## **Tasks**

(divided into group A - the online directory, and group B - the printed product directory)

### **A. Online National Solar Energy Directory**

#### **Task 1A: Initial Survey Period**


SEPA worked with other national and regional solar trade associations, utilities, and state energy offices to discuss the concept of the site and determine what information gaps existed that could be filled by the site. SEPA also worked with these same groups to gather commitments to help promote the site to their network of solar installers to initially populate the database.

#### **Task 2A: Website Design and Implementation**

SEPA subcontracted with the America Solar Energy Society (ASES) on the development of the website.

The home page of the website is provided below and the full site is available for review at [www.find-solar.org](http://www.find-solar.org).

SOLAR ESTIMATE | Find Solar Power Panel Installers contractors: Solar energy - electric water pool. Local directory of solar pros



Helping you put solar energy to work

About Us   Terms & Conditions

**MY SOLAR ESTIMATOR**

**FIND A SOLAR PRO**

**HOW IT WORKS**


**IMPORTANT STUFF**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**RESOURCES & LINKS**

**SOLAR PROS JOIN THE NETWORK**


*Imagine the Feeling...*



... You've just gone solar and now you're spinning back toward savings! Find out how...

**MY SOLAR ESTIMATOR**

**FIND A SOLAR PRO**



solar electric, solar water & pool heating, comfortable living


**Directory of Local Solar Installers**

★★★★★ » [Access 3,719 Ratings & Reviews](#) from Solar Energy Owners. Covering more than 2,070 Solar Professionals » [Find A Solar Pro](#)

**Federal Tax Incentives for Solar!** » [Learn](#)

**Reducing Greenhouse Gases** » [How?](#)

**Help us Grow the Solar Community**





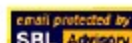
**Add a Solar Power Estimator** to your website. It's Free and customized

» [Get your Solar Power Calculator](#)


» [Link to Us](#)   » [Review Us](#)

A Free Public Service  
Serving the Solar Community Since 2000

» [Pro Login or Join](#)

A solar-powered site and service of Energy Matters LLC.

Contractor verification assisted by  **Experian**  
A word of insight

FIND-SOLAR.ORG is a free, public service. Our mission is to serve as a convenient, user-friendly means for home and small commercial building

<http://www.find-solar.org>[11/5/2008 2:06:20 PM]

### **Task 3A: Post-production**

SEPA released a beta version of the website and solicited feedback from utilities, solar companies and other stakeholders. The feedback was utilized to tweak the site before the official launch.

### **Task 4A: Media Promotion**

After the site was launched, a major media campaign was launched with two primary goals:

- 1) Increase the number of solar installers in the directory
- 2) Drive consumer traffic to the website

Earned media stories appeared in publications including Solar Today, Ultimate Home Design, Mother Earth News, Alternative Energy Retailer, Association of Energy Engineer's Renewable Energy Development Institute newsletter, Caldwell Bankers and Century 21's Mover's Guide, Washington Post, TreeHugger.com, Unpluggedliving.com, Energyvortex.com, Science Friday on NPR, among many others.

SEPA also worked with the National American Precipitation Syndicate (NAPS) in early 2006 to write an article that was placed in 840 newspapers with a readership of more than 49,000,000 in 35 states. The summary of results from the partnership with NAPS are provided below.

# NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

PRE EXECUTIVE

## HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

### Warming Up to the Idea of Solar Energy

Solar's a great new idea for those who don't have a hot water heater. But can it come to you? In many ways, yes. Solar energy is making solar energy and it's a practical reality for a growing number of homeowners.

With rising energy prices and concerns for the environment and about global warming, homeowners are looking at solar energy options. A new federal tax credit, gives homeowners a 30 percent credit on the cost of a solar water heating system. There is no cap for business owners; home owners receive a maximum \$2,000 credit for each system installed.

These credits make solar energy systems a feasible solution for hot water heating and electricity production for many building owners. Many homeowners are already benefit from solar heating for their pools and spas without government incentives.

"As awareness grows, along with computer air conditioning bills, we expect thousands more to consider their solar options," says Brad Collins, executive director of the American Solar Energy Society, based in Boulder, Colorado. "With continued rising energy costs, increasing interest in clean, renewable energy from sources like wind, solar, and geothermal, we believe more homeowners and business owners will look for sustainable alternatives."

In most states, another advantage of solar electric systems (also called photovoltaic or PV) is the option to send excess energy back to your local utility grid. For



The home's solar energy system was designed to generate energy both for the homeowner.

example, if you are a residential customer, your system may generate more electricity than you need during the day when your family is away at work and at school. Not metering allows you to send this excess electricity to the grid, getting your meter backwards, and reducing or offsetting the electricity portion of your bill.

When solar energy equipment is high quality and reliable, it is backed by warranties from large, reputable firms and installed by experienced installers. There are also many resources to learn more about solar energy.

"Financial risk is a great starting point to learn more about solar energy and to assess the options for your own particular home or building," says Julie Judd, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Solar Electric Power Association. "With national reports, including our data, media, advertising, and typical monthly energy bill, the site provides you with estimates of system size, costs, savings and other benefits."

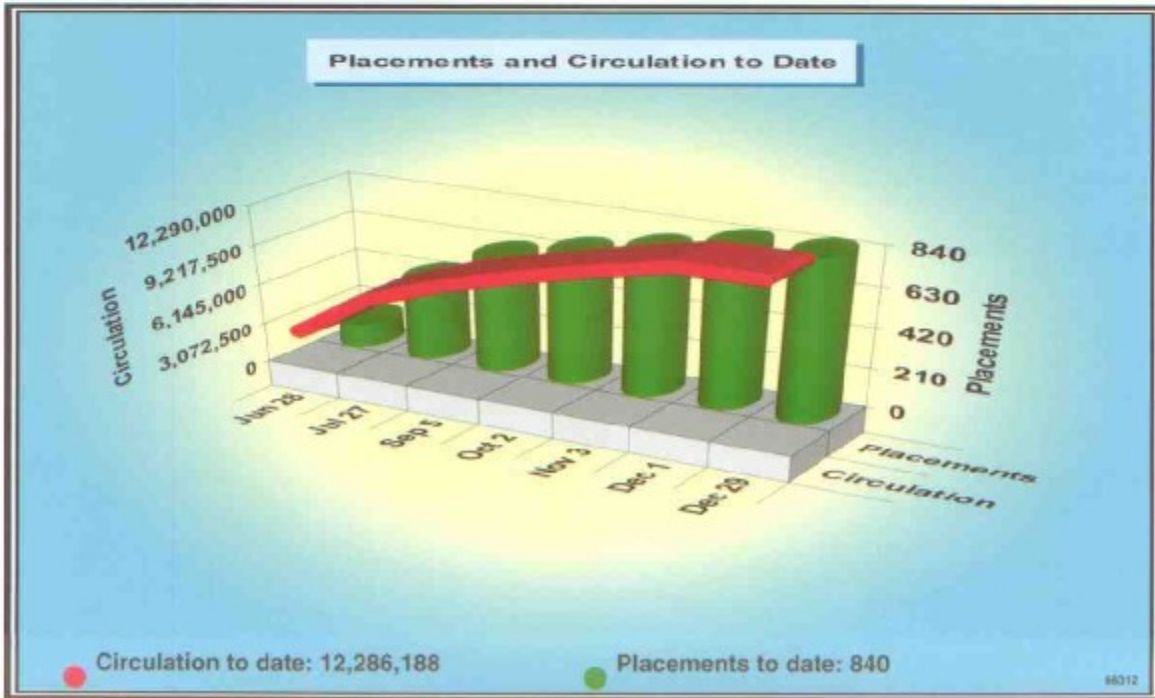
More information about solar energy benefits—plus a solar calculator and directory of qualified local solar installers—is available at [www.Psolar.com](http://www.Psolar.com) as a free public service.

**JULIE JUDD**  
**SOLAR ELECTRIC POWER ASSN**  
805 15TH STREET, NW, STE-510  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005

## RESULTS TO DATE

AS OF 12/29/06, THIS RELEASE GENERATED 840 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES IN 35 DIFFERENT STATES WITH A READERSHIP OF 49,144,752. THE COST OF BUYING THIS SPACE WOULD HAVE BEEN \$182,415.49  
[http://www.napsreport.com/2313\\_judd/68312.html](http://www.napsreport.com/2313_judd/68312.html)

Release shown for identification only, not repro quality.

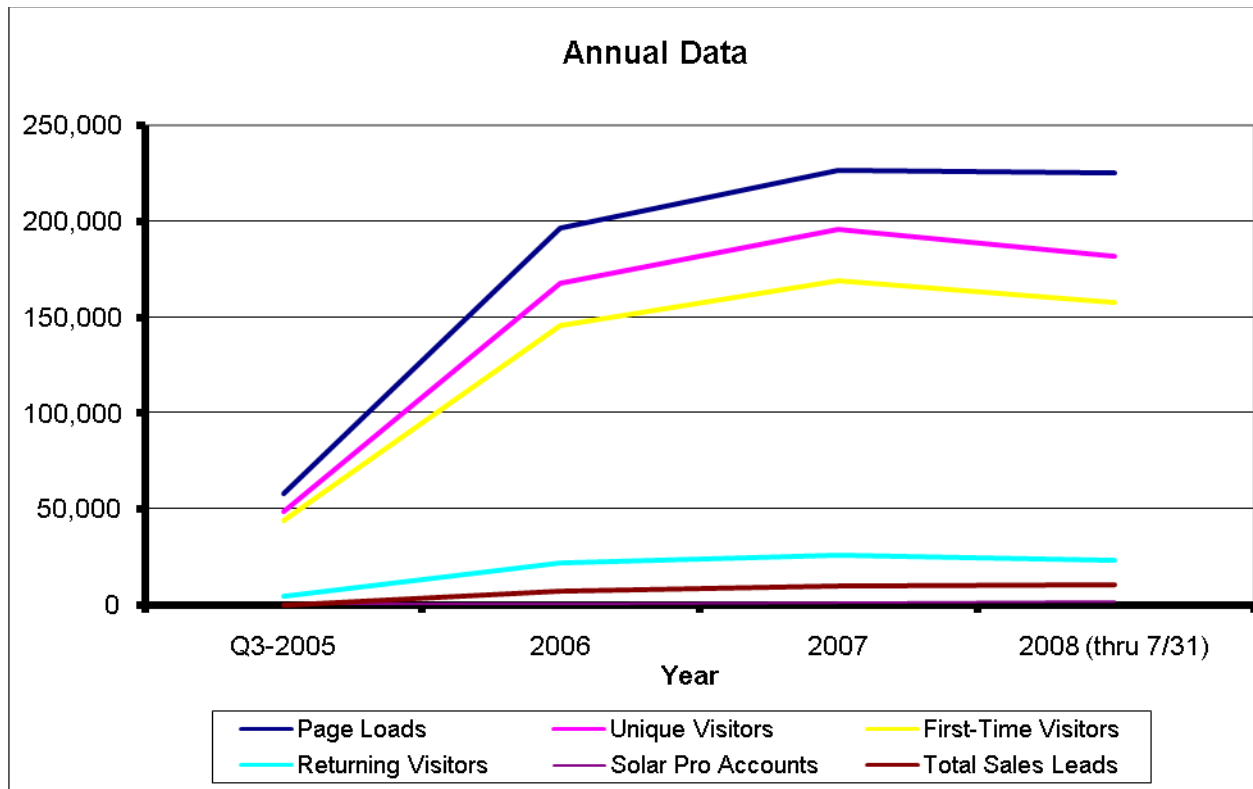


NAPS 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10118 Phone: (212)867-9000 Fax: (212)867-9010 [www.napsinfo.com](http://www.napsinfo.com)

### Task 5A: Ongoing Database Maintenance and Population

ASES was subcontracted to maintain the website. There were ongoing efforts throughout the period of performance to increase the database population:

- 1) Initial coordination with other groups as described in task 1A.
- 2) Multiple email campaigns to installers across the US.
- 3) Promotion at SEPA, ASES, and SEIA annual meetings.
- 4) Postcard mailer and telephone outreach campaign.



### Task 6A: Evaluation

Monthly reports were provided by the web subcontractor and reviewed to identify upturns or downturns in both the number of installers in the database and the number of unique visitors to the site. Any significant changes were analyzed to determine the cause and appropriate actions were taken.

## **B. Solar Decathlon Product Directory**

### Task 1B: Coordination with NREL and DOE

SEPA collected and reviewed printing quotes for the 2005 Solar Decathlon Product Directory and consulted with DOE and NREL about the estimated costs. DOE and NREL authorized

SEPA to make the product directory an online directory rather than a printed directory to both save on costs and to limit the use of paper on the National Mall.

Throughout the project, SEPA coordinated with NREL to obtain the vendor, manufacturer, and model name/number for each of the major products used in the homes of each of the 19 university teams, to design the look and feel of the directory, to communicate with each of the teams, and to promote the directory.

#### **Task 2B: First Draft Directory Development**

With the switch to an online directory, DOE and NREL were given the opportunity to review the directory through each stage of development. Feedback was provided by DOE and NREL on a regular basis.

#### **Task 3B: Second Draft Directory Development**

With the switch to an online directory, DOE and NREL were given the opportunity to review the directory through each stage of development. Feedback was provided by DOE and NREL on a regular basis.

#### **Task 4B: Final Draft Development**

With the switch to an online directory, DOE and NREL were given the opportunity to review the directory through each stage of development. Feedback was provided by DOE and NREL on a regular basis.

#### **Task 5B: Print Run**

With the switch to an online directory, there was no print run. Instead, the online directory was promoted through the 2005 Solar Decathlon website and in the materials that were printed and distributed onsite to decathlon visitors. Links to the Solar Power 2005 Exhibitor List were also included.

The site was hosted through the end of the project period.

In early 2007, the project team provided DOE and NREL with information that could be utilized by a new contractor that was hired to create a product director for the 2007 Solar Decathlon.