

Here Comes the Sun! EMCs Boldly Go Where Other Utilities Won't

Georgia Power [made headlines](#) in July when they announced that they would help their customers go solar. The "program" is a web portal where customers can log in and schedule a solar consultation. Georgia Power will then refer customers to financing if needed, and a solar installer. According to [an article on GreenTech Media](#), thousands of customers have filled out the online form, hundreds of consultations have been scheduled, and one system has been sold--to our own Sam Booher, Co-Chair of the Savannah River Group.



Why are reporters so interested in the Georgia Power web portal when two EMCs in Georgia are cutting straight to the chase and selling their customers solar at affordable prices if they want it?

[Cooperative solar programs](#), also known as community solar, allow any customer, including renters and homeowners with shaded property, to offset their energy use with solar power from an offsite project. Customers can purchase blocks of panels for a monthly fee and are then credited on their bills for the amount of energy the blocks produce.

Distributed generation programs like these stand in contrast to the utility-scale projects that represent 90% of Georgia Power's solar capacity. Benefits of distributed generation include reduced demand on centralized power plants during peak times and minimized congestion on the grid, which can prevent blackouts. While all solar is a safer, cleaner, and cost-competitive alternative to fossil fuels, embracing distributed generation will unleash Georgia's full solar energy potential.

Walton EMC launched their cooperative solar program July 1 with a 1 MW project at their Monroe headquarters. Customers pay between \$.095-\$.15 cents/kilowatt hour for their solar power, compared to their conventional price of \$.11/kilowatt hour. The program has been so popular, it prompted the co-op to quadruple the size of the program.

Cobb EMC, once mired in controversy as the largest investor in a [proposed coal plant in Washington County](#), recently launched its own community solar program. When Cobb EMC customers sign up for the program, the power they're buying

comes from the [Azalea solar farm](#) in Washington County. This is poetic justice of the best kind because five years ago, Sierra Club worked with concerned Cobb EMC customers and others to stop this unnecessary coal plant that would have wrecked Georgia's water and air. Now those same customers can buy clean solar power instead!

The success of the EMC's solar programs demonstrates that the residential demand for solar exists statewide, it is just a matter of the utilities providing easy opportunities for consumers to take advantage. Georgia Power's rooftop solar program helps identify if solar is a viable option for your home, but offers no alternatives for homeowners with improper roof conditions or restrictive neighborhood covenants.

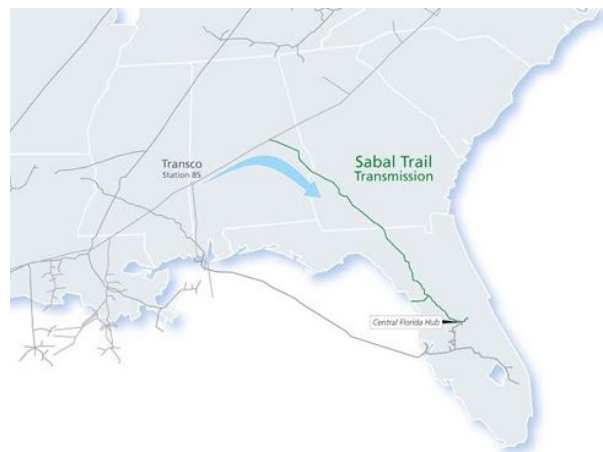
Georgia Power is moving away from coal but making big bets on natural gas and nuclear, a move that is risky for ratepayers and harmful to property owners. Meanwhile, more and more customers outside of their service area are enjoying access to clean, competitively-priced solar.

If you are in the Walton EMC service area, you can sign up for cooperative solar [here](#).

If you are in the Cobb EMC service area, you can sign up for cooperative solar [here](#).

Submit Comments on the Sabal Trail Pipeline

As we reported in the [last issue of Footnotes](#), on Sept. 4, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sabal Trail natural gas pipeline project. The Sabal Trail project would include over 500 miles of new natural gas pipeline in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. This \$3.5 billion project is proposed to allow Florida Power & Light and Duke Energy to build over 3,200 megawatts of new fossil fuel power plants burning fracked gas in Florida. There is no benefit to Georgia for the passage of Sabal Trail through southwest Georgia.



The public comment period is open through October 26, and we need as many comments submitted as possible. [Please submit your comments to FERC today!](#)

Tomorrow: National Sierra Club President Aaron Mair visits Atlanta!



*Aaron Mair,
Sierra Club President*

Equity and Environmental Justice: Progress and Challenges

October 22nd, 7 – 9:30 pm

Center for Civil and Human Rights

100 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd, Atlanta, GA 30313



*Felicia Davis,
Clark Atlanta
University*



*Daniel Blackmon,
Social Karma*



*Nathaniel Smith,
Partnership for
Southern Equity*



*Ted Terry,
Georgia AFL-CIO*

It's not too late to join us tomorrow, Thursday, October 22nd in Atlanta for an opportunity to meet the Sierra Club's first African American President in its 123-year history, Aaron Mair. The Chapter will host a Panel on Equity and Environmental Justice, where Mair will lead a conversation with Atlanta environmental justice leaders and the environmental community at large at the Center for Civil and Human Rights.

The conversation will help build support for undertaking the next phase of the EJ movement - a space where shared resources are cultivated and economic prosperity and a clean environment go hand-in-hand.

RSVP

Sierra Club Meetings

RAIL Committee, Monday, October 26, 7 p.m.

Contact Brionté McCorkle, brionte.mccorkle@sierraclub.org

Smart Energy Solutions Committee, Monday, November 2, 7 p.m.

Contact Cecilia Harris, ceciliaharris@gmail.com

Wildlands & Wildlife Committee, Monday, November 16, 7 p.m.

Contact William Tomlin, wmltom@gmail.com

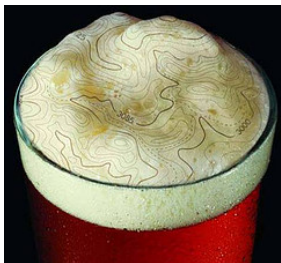
Don't live in Atlanta? Check out our [Local Groups](#).

Other Events



November 6-8 - HemlockFest - HemlockFest offers an eclectic mix of rock, blues, folk, bluegrass and world music and family activities in a peaceful and beautiful setting. The eleventh annual HemlockFest offers another amazing array of some of the area's most incredible talents. All proceeds from HemlockFest are applied to the cause of saving the hemlocks and preserving the integrity of the Southern Appalachian ecosystem. [Tickets here!](#)

November 7 - Sierra Club 101 - You joined the Sierra Club to help protect the environment-now what? Come learn about the Sierra Club and how to get involved in our local efforts. Open to members and non-members alike bring a friend! Please email [Yeou Jih](#) to register.



November 18 - Sierra Club & Beer - Every other month, Sierra Club and Beer provides a space and great beer for meeting like-minded people, while learning a little something new. There is even team trivia to make the night more interesting! Be sure to stick around through the end, when we give out door prizes. November's SC&B will be held at Six Feet Under West Midtown. Please consider biking and please contact [Yeou Jih](#) to RSVP so we are sure to bring enough brew for everyone!

December 10 - Georgia Chapter Holiday Open House - Save the date! Come help us celebrate a great year at the Sierra Club at our 4th Annual Holiday Open House! Meet fellow Sierrans and our coalition partners, view a slideshow of highlights of the year and enjoy some holiday cheer! Our Open House will be from 4:30-8:30 at the Chapter Office.



Looking for more? Check out our [Meetup Group](#) for even more events!



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This email was sent to: **brionte.mccorkle@sierraclub.org**

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743 E. College Ave, Suite C Decatur, GA 30030

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