



# Georgia Chapter

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## Will Solar in Georgia Ever Break Through?



Have you ever wondered why you don't see solar panels everywhere you go in Georgia? Despite the recent rainy spell, Georgia is a pretty sunny place, right? In fact, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory says that Georgia could produce 19% of its current energy demand, as we have the second highest photovoltaic solar resources, next to Florida, east of the Mississippi.

Yet utilities like Georgia Power and parent company Southern Company continue to argue that Georgia does not have significant solar resources, and that there "is no demand" for clean energy.

With Georgia Power's support, Georgia passed "net-metering" legislation in 2001. The law requires utilities to connect solar power generators to the grid, but restricts the size of systems to a mere 10kw for residential and 100kw for commercial. These limitations are artificial barriers that greatly hinder the growth of a potentially large industry in the state, and should be either removed or increased to at least 2 MW. Additionally, the law links the amount of solar power that Georgia Power must buy from solar producers to the demand for their "premium" green power program, which asks consumers to pay an extra \$5.50 for a block of 50% solar and 50% landfill gas-to-energy. Thus, Georgia Power doesn't have to buy solar energy from producers if Georgia Power customers aren't paying more for "green energy."

The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club wishes it could encourage customers to sign up for the program, but we don't believe landfill-gas-to-energy is green, or renewable. Much like coal plants, landfills harm the communities surrounding them and produce myriad harmful environmental effects. What's more, because garbage-based power is less expensive than coal, we don't think anyone should have to pay extra for it. We encourage Georgia Power to create a 100% Solar Power program.

Georgia is one of just three states in the US, along with North Carolina and Florida, where utilities oppose Solar Purchase Agreements. In many other states, companies like [Sungevity](#) and [SunRun](#) are helping people go solar without a huge financial commitment upfront. These companies install the panels on your roof and sell you the electricity. Try to do that as a Georgia Power customer and you will receive a "cease and desist" letter. According to Georgia Power, they are the only ones who can sell you power.

Recently, a pair of innovative and courageous doctors on Georgia's coast sought to challenge this prohibition. They formed a company called "Lower Rates for Customers, LLC" and installed solar panels on the Bethesda Home for Boys and the Driftaway Cafe in Savannah. They are selling the power back to Bethesda and Driftaway for 1% below what Georgia Power charges. The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club supports these initiatives, which extended on a grand scale could provide millions of Georgians with a cheaper and clean source of energy, while boosting the economy, and creating jobs.

## Quick Links

Last week, [Cobb EMC pulled out of POWER4Georgians](#), the power development effort that they started under former CEO Dwight Brown (now indicted on 35 counts), dealing a significant blow to the development of proposed coal-fired power Plants Washington and Ben Hill. POWER4Georgians is down to about 23% of its original customer base, but four EMCs, Snapping Shoals, Central Georgia, Washington and Upson need to pull the plug to give these

proposals their needed end. [\*\*Send a note to Cobb EMC to say THANKS!\*\*](#)



## Sierra Club Meetings

**Smart Energy Team Meeting**, Monday, February 6, 7:00 p.m., Mike Walls -  
Chair, [mwalls@ellijay.com](mailto:mwalls@ellijay.com)

**Wildlands and Wildlife Committee Meeting**, Tuesday, February 21, 7:00 p.m.,  
Mike Murdock - Chair, [murdock1@mindspring.com](mailto:murdock1@mindspring.com)

**Beyond Factory Farming**, Wednesday, February 13, 7:30 p.m., Leah Garces -  
Chair, [Leah.Garces@ciwf.org](mailto:Leah.Garces@ciwf.org)

**RAIL**, Monday, February 13, 7:00 p.m., David Emory - Chair,  
[david.emory@gmail.com](mailto:david.emory@gmail.com)

**Atlanta Inner City Outings (ICO)**, Tuesday, January 24, 7:30 p.m., Naomi  
Bock, [atlantaico@gmail.com](mailto:atlantaico@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Events

### Sierra Club 101 - February 11



You got on our mailing list because you care about the environment and want help -- now what? Sierra Club 101! 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!

Breakfast and coffee provided. February 11, 10:30 a.m.- 12 p.m. Register online by clicking [here](#).

### Good Jobs Green Jobs Conference Coming to Atlanta - February 23-24

Now in its fifth year, the [Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference](#) -- the nation's leading forum for sharing ideas and strategies to build a green economy and create good, green jobs -- is headed to Atlanta! The conference will feature two days of exciting speakers and informative workshops, bringing together community leaders, union members, environmentalists, business leaders and elected officials to discuss how each region is, block by block, building the foundation for a green economy.



### Georgia Water Coalition Lobby Day - February 28



Mark your calendar for an exciting day under the Gold Dome. Georgia Conservation Voters Legislative Breakfast will kick off the day from 7:30-9:00 a.m., followed by an issue briefing from 9:00-11:00, after which you will be ready to take it to the ropes! The day will end with a press conference in Room 122 of the Capitol. More details will appear here as the event gets closer, or sign up for Georgia Water Coalition email [here](#).

### Greenprints Conference March 7-8

Now in its 15th year, [Greenprints](#) is a high-level forum for the sustainability-driven conversations that define our times. A gathering place for regionally and nationally renowned building science and design experts, as well as building industry professionals, Greenprints facilitates conversations between researchers and on-the-ground



practitioners.

### Illustrated Poem Contest for Kids Grades K-12

The Georgia Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS) is sponsoring an illustrated poem contest on "Rethinking Recycling" for students in Kindergarten - 12th grade. Deadline is March 16, 2012. Each age category winner will receive a \$50 prize and award certificate. Winners of the Georgia Section illustrated poem contest will advance to the ACS National Illustrated Poem Contest with prizes of \$300 (1st place) or \$150 (2nd place)! Click [here](#) for more info and registration form.



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