

# CEEPAC Monthly Updates – March 2012

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*Events, News and Announcements related to Climate, Energy, & Environment in the Washington Region*

## Events

- ✓ March 28: [Climate Adaptation Guidebook Presentation](#); COG Room 1; 12:30-2pm
- ✓ March 29: [Panel Discussion: Energy Loan Guarantees – Risks or Rewards?](#); Center for Strategic and International Studies; 10:00am – 12:00pm
- ✓ April 5: [Webcast: Selecting and Evaluating New and Underused Energy Technologies](#); U.S. Department of Energy; 1:30 – 3:00pm
- ✓ April 17: [Forum: Infrastructure Banks for Metropolitan Washington](#); George Mason University School of Public Policy; 10:00am – 2:30pm
- ✓ April 22: [Earth Day on the National Mall](#); National Mall; 11:00am to 7:00pm

## Climate, Energy, and Environment News

[BLS releases first-ever estimate of U.S. green jobs](#) (Mar. 22) The Bureau of Labor Statistics has released an estimate of the number of so-called green jobs in the United States economy, saying that 3.1 million people are employed in the production of goods and services that benefit the environment. BLS spent more than a year compiling its report, which found that green goods and services accounted for 2.4 percent of total United States employment in 2010. The study, based on a survey of employers and a relatively broad definition of the term “green,” will provide a baseline against which future job growth or decline can be measured.

[U.S. crude oil imports drop to lowest level since 1999 as domestic oil production rises](#) (Mar. 19) According to the Energy Information Administration, U.S. crude oil imports during 2011 fell to their lowest level in twelve years and were down 12% from their peak in 2005, as higher domestic oil production and decreased consumption of petroleum products reduced American refiners' purchases of foreign crude.

[Solar industry more than doubles capacity in 2011](#) (Mar. 14) The solar energy industry installed a record 1,855 megawatts of photovoltaic capacity in 2011, more than double the previous annual record of 887 megawatts set in 2010, according to a new U.S. Solar Market Insight report. The record level of solar installations is enough to power more than 370,000 homes and marks the first time the U.S. solar market has topped one gigawatt in a single year. GTM Research and the Solar Energy Industries Association estimate the U.S. solar market's total value surpassed \$8.4 billion in 2011.

[First Solar Announces 20-Megawatt Maryland Solar Project](#) (Mar 14) First Solar, Inc. announced its 100 percent stake in Maryland Solar, a 20-megawatt photovoltaic solar power project in Hagerstown, Md. The project, which has a contract to sell electricity and renewable energy credits to FirstEnergy Solutions, is expected to start construction in Q2 2012 and be completed in Q4 2012. It will use First

Solar's advanced thin film PV modules to generate enough clean, renewable energy to power approximately 2,700 average Maryland homes, displacing approximately 23,000 metric tons of CO2 annually--the equivalent of taking 4,400 cars off the road each year.

**[U.S. Wind Generation Increased 27% in 2011](#)** (Mar. 12) According to the Energy Information Administration, generation from wind turbines in the United States increased 27% in 2011 compared to 2010, continuing a trend of rapid growth. During the past five years capacity additions of wind turbines were the main driver of the growth in wind power output. Federal production tax credits and grants for electricity from certain renewable sources as well as State-level renewable portfolio standards have encouraged both capacity additions and increased generation from wind and other renewable sources.

**[Energy Department Announces \\$180 Million for New Initiative to Deploy U.S. Offshore Wind Projects](#)** (Mar. 1) As part of President Obama's "all-of-the-above" approach to domestic energy policy, Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced the start of a six-year, \$180 million initiative to accelerate offshore wind deployment in the U.S. An initial \$20 million will be available this year.

**[U.S. CO2 emissions to stay below 2005 levels as coal use shrinks](#)** (Jan 24) The Energy Information Administration (EIA) released an early version of its annual energy outlook which predicted a slowdown in growth of energy use over the next two decades amid economic recovery and improved energy efficiency. The report highlights the fact that carbon-intensive coal generation will see a major decline in the power sector in the coming decades, which will ensure energy-related CO2 emissions will not exceed 2005 levels at any point before 2035.

## **State Government Update (See also State Legislative Update)**

### **District of Columbia**

**[D.C. Considers Community Solar Power](#)** (Mar. 9) The D.C. Council is considering legislation that would allow people to get their energy from solar panels anywhere in the city. Steve Seuser, a member of the solar advocacy group D.C. SUN, explains: "The problem is if people can't do solar on their own roofs, there's no way to connect a solar system they would have somewhere else on their Pepco bill. That's what this bill would do." "The main people who can benefit from solar energy generation are people who own the building, who own their own home, or their own businesses," says Sitaraman. "Other people, like renters, are not able to benefit from solar energy generation." Similar bills have been under consideration in Maryland and Virginia, and Alexander says she hopes the D.C. bill will be passed before year's end. After all, Spann says it's all about promoting clean energy, and preserving resources.

**[Va. governor McDonnell endorses D.C budget autonomy](#)** (Feb. 22) Gov. McDonnell informed key leaders on Capitol Hill that he supports budget autonomy for D.C., a major goal for city officials who want to disentangle the District's annual budgeting process from that of the federal government. In a letter sent Feb. 9 to House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) and House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), McDonnell said he wanted to give the city the budgetary freedom that "the governors of every state enjoy."

## Maryland

**Maryland Emissions Reduction Goals Attainable by 2020, State Report Finds** (Mar. 21) By continuing to implement a “diverse suite of multi-sector climate programs,” Maryland is capable of achieving by 2020 its statutory mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent, compared to a 2006 baseline, according to a draft plan issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

**Md. Senate committee hears fracking fee bill** (Mar. 6) In a hearing before the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee, opponents of using new hydraulic fracturing drilling techniques in western Maryland asked lawmakers to support a fee to fund a study of potential environmental impacts. Industry officials, meanwhile, warned members of the Senate committee not to turn away what could be an economic boon for two western counties.

**O’Malley continues push for offshore wind** (Feb. 23) Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley (D) addressed the House Economic Matters Committee in support of his offshore wind plan, arguing that environmental and economic benefits would outweigh the cost to ratepayers. “It is projected that offshore wind could put 1,300 moms and dads to work during the five-year construction period. After that it will directly support 250 permanent jobs and indirectly support 230 more,” O’Malley told committee members.

**Bag fee dead in Prince George’s** (Mar. 25) An attempt to give Prince George’s County lawmakers the authority to impose a 5-cent fee on disposable shopping bags has died in Annapolis. The bill, backed by County Executive Rushern L. Baker III (D), the Prince George’s County Council and a majority of the county’s delegates and senators, fell one vote short of a majority Saturday in the House Environmental Matters Committee.

## Virginia

**Virginia state budget standoff ends** (Mar. 22) The Senate Finance Committee has unanimously agreed to an \$85 billion spending plan, which shifts tens of millions of dollars toward schools, Medicare and toll relief, and borrows \$300 million more for the Metro-to-Dulles rail project. The full Senate is expected to reconvene Monday to vote on the plan. It is expected to clear the Senate and be rejected on Tuesday in the more conservative House. It would then move to a conference committee, where negotiators from both parties and both chambers would try to come to an agreement.

**Public meetings will be held on uranium mining in Virginia** (Mar. 23) The National Academy of Sciences will hold a series of meetings next week to brief the public on its two-year study of uranium mining in Virginia. The report said uranium could be mined but that Virginia Uranium, a company seeking to mine a massive site in Southside, would have to take measures to protect workers, the public and the environment in Virginia, which has no experience unearthing a radioactive element.

**Cuccinelli to host a series of town halls on electric rates** (Mar. 13) Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli (R) will host a series of town halls in Southside Virginia next week about electric rates. As attorney general, Cuccinelli represents citizens in electric rate cases, including those against Appalachian Power. Cuccinelli will discuss what factors drive the prices that consumers pay for electricity in Lynchburg, Roanoke and Martinsville in March and in Gate City, Abingdon, Tazewell, Pulaski and Christiansburg in April.

## Federal Update

[Reid sets vote on oil and gas benefits, alternative credits](#) (Mar. 23) An energy tax package that repeals a handful of oil and gas benefits while extending several endangered alternative energy credits is set for a Senate test vote Monday, with Democrats hoping that its political potency outlasts its likely failure on the floor. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) yesterday moved to cut off debate on a bill that would restore a passel of expired or soon-to-end renewable-power tax breaks while ending a group of fossil-fuel supports often targeted by President Obama. A measure rolling back oil and gas benefits without tackling clean energy credits drew 52 Senate votes in May, but it remains to be seen whether that ultimately represents a high-water mark for the anti-subsidy push that is a flagship for Obama's environmentalist base.

[Interior finalizes wildlife-protection guidelines for wind projects](#) (Mar. 23) The Interior Department released voluntary guidelines for wind energy developers today aimed at limiting bird kills and minimizing other damage to natural resources. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said the "common sense" guidelines should steer wind projects away from places where they would have an outsized impact on wildlife and provide developers certainty and flexibility. The guidelines -- which take effect immediately -- encourage wind developers to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service as early as possible to allow biologists to assess a project's potential impacts, agency officials said.

[Obama to Expedite Southern Leg of Keystone XL Pipeline](#) (Mar. 22) During a stop Thursday in Oklahoma, Obama announced the administration would "cut through the red tape" for the southern leg of the Keystone XL pipeline. The president issued an executive order creating a steering committee that is supposed to devise improvements in permitting decisions but not to get involved in any particular project. He also signed a memo that directs federal agencies to "coordinate and expedite their reviews, consultations and other processes" to speed up decisions on domestic oil pipeline projects — such as Keystone XL's southern, Oklahoma-to-Texas segment.

[Lisa P. Jackson Testifies Before U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on EPA Budget](#) (Mar. 22) Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, highlighting the need for environmental funding in the President's Fiscal Year 2013 budget. The budget proposes that \$1.2 billion - nearly 15 percent of EPA's overall request - be allocated back to the states and tribes, through categorical grants. This includes funding for state and local air quality management grants, pollution control grants and the tribal general assistance program. The budget also requests \$14 million to assess questions regarding hydraulic fracturing, and funding for EPA's EPA's Federal Vehicle and Fuel Standards and Certification program.

[Sen. Jeff Bingaman Introduces Clean Energy Standard Act of 2012](#) (Mar. 1) Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) floated highly anticipated legislation Thursday to reduce power plant pollution by mandating greater use of low-carbon energy sources. The bill, known as the Clean Energy Standard Act of 2012, requires that large power companies supply increasing amounts of electricity from low-carbon sources like wind, solar, nuclear and natural gas beginning in 2015. By 2035, 84 percent of power produced by large utilities will come from low-carbon sources, according to the legislation.

## International Update

[Nigerians file pollution suit against Shell](#) (Mar. 26) A lawsuit against Royal Dutch Shell PLC's Nigerian subsidiary was filed in a U.K. court Friday for spilling an alleged 500,000 barrels of oil from a pipeline in 2008 and 2009, according to the law firm Leigh Day & Co. The multimillion-dollar claim represents at least 11,000 villagers in the community of Bodo in the Rivers State, Nigeria. This is the first instance of an oil company facing legal claims in English courts from a developing world community for environmental damage.

[Scientists Call For Stronger Global Governance To Address Climate Change](#) (Mar. 17) Stronger global governance is needed to mitigate human impact on the earth's climate and to ensure sustainable development, according to 32 scientists who published a paper in Friday's issue of the journal Science. In "Navigating the Anthropocene: Improving Earth System Governance," ([summary](#)), the scholars recommend changes both within and outside of the United Nations, including: A shift in the UN from consensus decision making to qualified majority voting; Creation of a new council within the UN, the Council on Sustainable Development, that would consolidate the many agencies and more than 900 environmental treaties currently in effect; and A stronger role for non-governmental organizations in international decision making.

[German subsidy cuts may depress global solar market](#) (Mar. 5) Germany's imminent solar subsidy cuts will lead to lower demand for medium- to large-scale photovoltaic plants, SMA Solar Technology said Friday. Germany is proposing to cut the feed-in tariff, which pays premium rates to producers of solar energy, by between 20.2 percent and 29 percent this month. If the German parliament approves the government's draft bill, further decreases will take place each month, starting in May, with plants larger than 10 megawatts cut off from subsidies completely after July 1. SMA said the cuts will lead to subdued growth or even a decline in worldwide demand for new solar installations this year, as it's currently unclear whether Asian and American markets can fully compensate for the decline in Germany.

## Research Articles and Reports

[US Energy Information Administration releases sneak peak of Annual Energy Outlook](#)

[OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction](#)

[BLS Green Jobs Initiative](#)

[Lung doctors expect respiratory diseases will worsen with global climate change](#)