

# Careers

Home > Money & Business > Careers

Print | Subscribe | + Share this Story

- **Article**
- **Photo (1)**
- **Video**
- **Comments (8)**

## The Truth About All Those Green Jobs

**Millions of new energy jobs? Perhaps, but the estimates may be a bit too rosy**

By *Liz Wolgemuth*

Posted March 25, 2009

It's no wonder that the "green jobs" chant has become a chorus. What's not to like about the prospect of millions of newly created and hard-to-outsource positions? Particularly if they are filled by people hard at work designing and building and installing the very equipment that will overhaul the nation's energy habit—replacing, or at least diminishing, the nation's addiction to oil with plentiful, renewable, made-in-America energy. This idyllic vision is being trumpeted in newly Democratic Washington. As President Obama, who is planning to create 5 million jobs with a \$150 billion investment, puts it, "A green, renewable-energy economy isn't some pie-in-the-sky, far-off future. It is now. It is creating jobs now."

**A rainbow is visible looking West from Palm Springs, Calif. on Monday, Jan. 28, 2008 next to an array of wind turbines.**

A rainbow next to an array of wind turbines in Palm Springs, Calif.

As good as it sounds, just how real is the promise of all these green jobs? Sapped by the recession and collapsing oil prices, the fledgling green movement needs big government support to snap back in the short term. Because green energy is labor intensive, it promises many jobs, but a successful national shift from fossil fuels would mean pain for the 3.5 million whose jobs are tied to the traditional energy industry. Also, higher energy costs could threaten the

advertisement

### Solutions for Business

- **Business Intelligence: Thriving in Economic Uncertainty**  
In an uncertain economy, many companies feel the pinch of reduced business activity. **READ** how Business Intelligence can help make smarter operational decisions.
- **Navigating a Turbulent Economy**  
Times of economic turbulence may bring renewal to organizations. **READ** what Microsoft Corporation suggests as several starting points.
- **Unified Messaging: A Better Solution**  
For today's decision makers, UM is the preferred solution for telephone call answering and voice messages in most enterprises. **READ** how this evolution occurred.

Content provided by **Microsoft**

Jobs Search  
SimplyHired  
**Find your dream job today! Browse thousands of job postings.**

**Popular:** Sales jobs, Accounting jobs, Healthcare jobs

### Retirement Widget

**Get Retirement News on Your Site**  
Click [here](#) to add a Usnews.com retirement widget.

advertisement

**Get Stock Quotes**

For now, the massive stimulus bill has boosted the short-term fortunes of green energy. It puts \$70 billion toward green initiatives—retrofitting buildings to slash their appetite for energy, upgrading public transit systems, and building an electrical grid that can better integrate renewable energy. The stimulus also demonstrates a key shift in public attitudes toward the green agenda, says Robert Pollin, an economist at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and a leading researcher on green jobs. "It's the first time the notion that investment in a clean-energy economy is connected officially in government policy with the idea of job creation," Pollin says.

The recession has stunted the green growth spurt, as financing has slowed for wind projects and solar firms have laid off workers, but industry proponents and business people are focused on Washington. "I am very optimistic," says Andrei Guschin, a biofuels researcher who cofounded an algae technology firm in 2006. "A big chunk of this optimism comes from the new administration."

Green industries are heavily reliant on manpower, an aspect that makes them especially alluring when it comes to government-led job creation. Pollin's research at the Political Economy Research Institute, commissioned by the liberal Center for American Progress, estimates that \$100 billion in green investment would create 2 million jobs, while \$100 billion handed out to households (as in the 2008 stimulus package) would create 1.7 million jobs, and \$100 billion spent on the oil industry would create only 542,000 jobs.

Despite the political rhetoric about [green jobs](#), many people still aren't completely sure what those jobs are. Broadly, they include everything from scientists and engineers devising technological breakthroughs to people building wind turbines and installing solar panels. A national movement toward energy efficiency would include such labor-intensive work as retrofitting buildings, which puts roofers, insulation installers, and carpenters to work on existing structures. Improving the nation's mass transit system would require welders and civil engineers and dispatchers.

The bulk of those jobs are clearly blue-collar. Skeptics charge that the green movement will create jobs with lower wages than the fossil fuel industry positions they're replacing. Labor unions already are angling for a hand in the green workforce, promising to lift pay.

Of course, a secretary at a solar company could also be considered to be working in a green job. "Sometimes, I think the discussion of green jobs focuses on niches—the green economy as a niche or addition to the regular economy," says K.C. Golden, policy director for the nonprofit environmental advocacy group Climate Solutions and coauthor of the book *Green Jobs: A Guide to Eco-Friendly Employment*. "I think of it as a greening of the economy at large. A lot of these jobs are going to be in existing sectors. We are going to need a dramatic move away from fossil fuels."

**Strange bedfellows.** The prospect of green work has also gained favor with folks who could never be mistaken for tree-huggers. At a recent Good Jobs Green Jobs conference in Washington, D.C., steelworkers sat side by side with Sierra Club members. They together cheered for both the Teamsters' James Hoffa and for Peter Lehner, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. Labor unions and environmental advocacy groups haven't always gotten along so well, but the

## Enter up to 10 Nasdaq, Amex, NYSE, or OTCBB Symbols (separate by space or comma)

[Symbol Look-Up](#)

[Launch Stock Ticker](#)



### Biz Blogs

- [Alpha Consumer](#)
- [Capital Commerce](#)
- [Dave's Download](#)
- [Flowchart](#)
- [Fresh Greens](#)
- [Luxe Life](#)
- [New Money](#)
- [On Careers](#)
- [On Small Business](#)
- [Planning to Retire](#)
- [Risky Business](#)
- [The Best Life](#)
- [The Collar](#)
- [The Home Front](#)
- [The Inside Job](#)
- [The Ticker](#)

### [America's Best Healthy Places to Retire](#)

*U.S. News* writers profile 10 healthy retirement spots around the country.

- [Where Should I Retire?](#)
- [Photos: Healthiest Places](#)
- [Video: Best Places to Retire](#)

### Money & Business Calculators

#### [Personal Finance Calculators](#)

- [Budget Analysis](#)
- [Net Worth Calculator](#)
- [Student Budget Calculator](#)
- [Cost-of-Debt Calculator](#)
- [Savings Calculator](#)

#### [Credit Card Calculators](#)

- [The True Cost of Paying the Minimum](#)
- [How Much Can I Save By Transferring My Balances?](#)
- [What Will It Take to Pay Off My Balance?](#)
- [Which Is Better: Airlines or Low Interest Card?](#)
- [Which Is Better: Cash Back or Low Interest Card?](#)

#### [Car Calculators](#)

- [Buy or Lease a Vehicle?](#)
- [How Much Car Can You Afford?](#)
- [Auto Loan Calculator](#)
- [Do You Owe More Than Your Car's Worth?](#)

#### [Career Calculators](#)

- [What Job is Right for You?](#)

unions have come to see how advantageous a green movement could be for organized labor as it looks for new members. After all, a commercial-scale wind turbine has more than 8,000 parts and uses an amount of steel equivalent to 225 midsize cars.

1 2 3 Next Page >

### Related News

- [30 Best Careers for 2009](#)
- [Video: Green from Inside Out](#)

Tags: [careers](#) | [environment](#) | [energy](#) | [renewable energy](#)

[Print](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [+ Share this Story](#) | [Share](#): [Related Content](#)

### Reader Comments

[Read all 8 comments about this article](#)

Green  
Jobs

Great! 2  
million jobs  
to be filled  
with  
existing  
energy  
workers.  
Lets see,  
that leaves  
zero jobs  
for the rest  
of us. Nice  
work.

Meanwhile,  
there are at  
least 7  
million  
unemployed  
people of

**DaveH** of **NC**

May 21, 2009 20:20:39 PM [\[permalink\]](#)

[\[report comment\]](#)

- [Salary Wizard: How Much Are You Worth?](#)
- [Cost-of-Living Calculator](#)

### Retirement Calculators

- [How Do I Reach My Retirement Goal?](#)
- [How Much Money Will I Need for Retirement?](#)
- [How Much Will My 401\(k\) Earn?](#)
- [What Will My Monthly Retirement Income Be?](#)