

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: PROSPECT SOLAR

As part of MDV-SEIA's competitive quarterly spotlight series, we sat down with Jon Hillis of Prospect Solar to learn more about their work in the region.



A 4.4 kw, 20-panel PV system on the roof of Prospect Solar's Sterling, VA office.

Who is Prospect Solar?

Prospect Solar was created in late 2010 when our sister commercial waterproofing, roofing, and green roofing company, Prospect Waterproofing, started receiving requests to bid rooftop solar on commercial projects. Apparently the installers that were providing bids to our general contractor clients were not qualified to install systems on new roofs and still keep the roofing manufacturer's warranties intact. Since we subcontract our installation labor to Prospect Waterproofing we've also had the luxury of being able to grow slowly over the past 3 years, working in specific market segments that

are suited to our unique abilities, and installing when projects are ready. To date, most of our installations have been performed in the large scale residential and smaller commercial markets, with many projects requiring some sort of remedial roofing work as well.

Our team consists of Jim Stamer – Owner/President, Jon Hillis – Vice President, Drew Skinner – Lead Estimator, Kevin Graves, NABCEP certified Engineer, Nick Messer – Sales Associate and Marketing, and Clinton Eickelberg – Contract Administration.

Tell us about one of your recent projects. What is unique about it?

In 2013 we completed a 41 kW array at Catoctin Creek Distilling Company in Purcellville, Virginia which is the largest solar array installed in Loudoun County and one of the largest privately owned arrays in Virginia. The owner of Catoctin Creek wanted to create solar powered spirits to the greatest extent possible so the system was sized to provide an offset of 70% to 85% of his projected energy use. Since the facility was a retrofit of an existing space we had to estimate the new usage from his utility bills at the previous location.

The building where Catoctin Creek relocated was the historic 100-year-old Case Building in downtown Purcellville. Since the loading capacity of the existing building's roof structure was not known the owner had to include a structural renovation in his budget to support the weight of the new equipment on the roof. Appearance was also a concern so a low profile ballasted racking system was used.

Upon completion of the system, Prospect Solar and Catoctin Creek Distilling Company hosted a New Power for the Old Dominion event. The presentation was held in their tasting room and distilling room, attended by a panel of

environmental and renewable energy experts and about 80 local residents. Catoctin Creek may have the only certified organic, kosher, solar powered, rye whiskey in the world. Try the Roundstone Rye!



Prospect Solar's project for the Catoctin Creek Distilling Company. Upon completion of the system, Prospect Solar and Catoctin Creek Distilling Company hosted a New Power for the Old Dominion event. The presentation was held in their tasting room and distilling room, attended by a panel of environmental and renewable energy experts and about 80 local residents. Catoctin Creek may have the only certified organic, kosher, solar powered, rye whiskey in the world.

Do you have any other exciting projects in the pipeline?

We are waiting for final permit approval from Fairfax County for a 56 kW commercial installation at an office building in Chantilly, Virginia. This installation will be the largest array in Fairfax giving Prospect Solar the bragging rights to two prominent counties in Northern Virginia.

The DC SEU low-income resident

installations in the District of Columbia will also keep us busy through the summer. We hope to install 20 to 25 of these projects this year with Darrell Green and Trusted Solutions Group.

What opportunities for future growth do you see in the field?

Currently the District of Columbia holds the most promise and unrealized potential for new solar installation in the DC metro area. With the undersupplied SREC market, Renewable Energy Incentive Program, PACE financing option, and the new option of Community Renewable Energy Facility installations there is a tipping point in the near future for commercial installations.

Lack of incentives and low utility prices make Virginia one of the greatest untapped solar markets in the nation. While these issues are roadblocks for some, they also present an opportunity for creative marketing for others. Recent achievements in the General Assembly for renewable energy also give hope for a sunnier future in Virginia.

On the broader scale, the battery backup market is poised to reap any benefits of the net energy metering wars. This all depends on how hard the utilities intend to dig in their heels. New community solar opportunities will also be able to increase the market 5 fold while decreasing installation costs.

What future challenges do you expect to see?

Challenges to existing net energy metering codes from utilities are just beginning across the nation and Virginia will likely not be immune. Until all parties can agree on methods for determining costs and benefits for all aspect of

distributed solar generation there can be no consensus and the issue will remain. We are hoping a push from the General Assembly and the industry in Virginia will move this dialogue forward with the utilities.

What is your stance on distributed generation policy?

My stance on energy and distributed generation policy derives from the concept that renewables should be allowed to compete on a level playing field with traditional generation/distribution and correctly priced fuel sources, with no incentives for either, and with decoupling of utilities' profits from their sales of energy. If this were to happen large scale traditional generation facilities would slowly shut down and distributed generation renewable energy would be the only source of new energy installed on the US grid from this date forth. Getting to that point with the current state of the renewable energy industry and the investor owned utility model is the problem at hand.

Do you have any final thoughts for someone who is interested in joining the industry?

My suggestion to you is read 10 or so renewable energy articles everyday for several months and you will soon be as up to date as most. More important than technology, remain current on the policy and legislation in your state, county, etc. and get involved at that level. Understand what the market drivers are in the area where you decide to work. Follow others' blogs in the renewable energy industry and on Twitter as well.