

ASES Chapter News 12/5/2005

NC Sustainable Energy Association

submitted by Mark Ginsberg, Executive Director

The North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) has had a busy and very productive year. In February, NCSEA hired our Policy Director, Ivan Urlaub, to ensure NCSEA continues to advance our state toward a sustainable energy future. In fact, Ivan just received an appointment to the ASES Board of Directors and will be Chair of ASES' Policy Committee!

In the N.C. General Assembly, with the help of the NC Solar Center and the support of many allies in the business, agricultural and environmental communities, we were able to expand our state's generous renewable energy tax credits, and assure their retention through 2010 (they were going to expire at the end of 2005). NCSEA helped pass a record 7 pieces of sustainable energy legislation into law in 2005!

NCSEA continued to work very closely with other organizations to educate our citizens and policymakers about the severe impacts of global warming. We were partners in the successful effort in 2005 to gain passage of a bill in the N.C. General Assembly creating a Global Warming Study Commission. NCSEA's Policy Director, Ivan Urlaub, was appointed to the Study Commission in December and will serve through November 1, 2006. We are fast becoming the "go to" folks for information on the positive economic, environmental and social contributions that renewable energy and energy efficiency can make in greenhouse gas mitigation.

This summer, the N.C. Utilities Commission (NCUC) adopted a simplified "plug and play" interconnection standard for small generators, a result of over 1½ years of negotiations between Dominion, Duke and Progress energy companies and NCSEA, with invaluable help from the NC Solar Center. In a big victory, the NCUC also agreed with NCSEA that green tags belong to renewable energy generators, and not the electric utilities. This will help offset costs to renewable system owners and make it easier for renewable energy businesses to make a profit.

Following on the heels of that announcement, we requested reopening of the proceedings on net metering, and as a result of our 7 years of hard work, North Carolina has *finally* joined 39 other states and the District of Columbia in making net metering available to the customers of North Carolina's three investor-owned utilities. NCSEA is now working to improve and expand these standards.

As facilitator of the Renewable Energy for Economic Development (REED) Alliance, NCSEA hosted the conference "Renewable Energy for Economic Development: *A Partnership for the Future*". This REED Alliance event brought together representatives from the industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors, economic development professionals and government officials to demonstrate the connections between renewable energy and economic development.

We recorded our largest turnout yet for our Statewide Solar and Green Home Tour. Approximately one thousand folks came out in Asheville, Boone, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh and Wilmington to tour homes and/or attend lectures on high-performance building on the weekend of ASES' National Solar Tour.

We have many challenges ahead in 2006, including convincing the NCUC to thoroughly examine energy efficiency and conservation measures *before* allowing the building of new coal and nuclear power plants in our state, securing funds for the continuance of our State Energy Office and gaining passage of a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) to mandate that a percentage of our electric power is generated from renewable sources.