

## Expert Q&amp;As

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5**Q&A: Betsy Ferris Wyman, Vice President of Sales, SunDog Solar**

By Anne Pyburn Craig

*Sundog Solar is a renewable energy company based in Chatham, New York, a leading source for solar electric systems, solar hot water systems and bio spray foam insulation for both residential and commercial markets. They're located in Solaqua Power & Art, a center for green business and the arts powered with renewable energy.*



*Betsy Ferris Wyman, SunDog Solar's Vice President of Sales, has a B.S. degree and over 10 years experience in the field of environmental engineering. MGB talked with Ms. Wyman about strategy, public/private collaboration, and how things are going...*

**In a climate of unpleasant economic news, Sundog appears to be thriving.**

We are thriving and hiring in a time when many companies are laying off and going out of business. Without a doubt it is because of the many advantages that renewable energy installations offer. "Green" systems like solar electric and solar hot water systems insulate clients from future price increases, qualify for generous tax credits, rebates and loans, and literally "pay back" the system owner in a few short years of use.

**Do you believe that the green economy offers a path forward out of the present mess?**

Absolutely, not only does a "green economy" create jobs and stimulate local economies (most of these jobs cannot be outsourced) it also gives us energy independence, perhaps the most important national security issue that is facing us today.

**Sundog works with a business incubator, Solaqua Power and Art. How does that work out in practice?**

SunDog is the first incubator business to launch from Solaqua. Solaqua provided the necessary resources to start the SunDog business. Now that SunDog is successfully up and running, we are turning our attention to launching other businesses. Next in line is the Solaqua Solar Thermal Institute. The Institute's mission is to demonstrate, educate, and train installers on solar thermal (solar hot water) technologies. We also have plans to launch a construction business that specializes in manufacturing economical energy-efficient homes.

**Any lessons that other communities could take away to help them create such incubators successfully?**

Local governments should make it as easy as possible for the incubator to operate, from fast tracking permits to granting variances, green incubator businesses should move to the "front of the line". We are extremely fortunate to operate in Chatham where the citizens and local government have been very supportive of our efforts.

**Sundog is working on developing a Power Purchase Agreement for public and nonprofit entities. How does that work?**

Power Purchase Agreements (also called solar leasing) are an excellent way for a municipal or non-profit entity to have a solar electric system installed without having to pay a large upfront cost. Instead the recipient of the electricity only pays for the offset cost of the electricity that is produced by the system.

**And what are some ways governments can work with the private sector toward sustainability?**

If state and local governments want green businesses to thrive then there have to be incentives (in the form of tax credits, rebates, grant monies, property tax exclusions, fast track permitting) to encourage business owners to invest. Some of these incentives are available right now, but they vary depending on where the business and customers are located. We need to have long term, consistent incentives in place.

**Do you think solar power is catching on with the commercial market?**

Yes, thanks in large part to the benefits provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (aka "the Stimulus"). Not only do New York businesses have the advantage of receiving a rebate from NYSERDA of \$3.00 per watt (for approved grid-tied systems up to 40 kW) but they also can receive a 30% federal tax credit or cash grant and bonus depreciation. When you add all the incentives together the payback on a commercial solar electric system is nine years.

Considering the system is guaranteed for twenty five and will work for fifty, that is quite a savings!