

Utah looks for niche in green economy

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Forget blue-collar and white-collar jobs. Green is the new hue.

Though loosely defined and not without skeptics who question their staying power, "green-collar" jobs are growing. And the competition to lure them is heating up with Congress weighing more than \$50 billion in energy-related incentives.

So, how does Utah figure into this new economy?

It doesn't, at least not in any big way. But there are efforts afoot to change that.

"The title 'leader' in renewable energy is still up for grabs," said Jason Perry, executive director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

If you define green-collar jobs as anything that puts Utah on a cleaner path, countless jobs fit the bill: public transit and recycling workers, "green" architects and contractors who weatherize homes.

But Perry said Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. takes a more global view, working to reduce Utah's carbon footprint and celebrating ribbon cuttings this past year for geothermal, wind, solar and hydro-electric power plants.

It's a good first step, say experts. "It creates an environment that values reducing emissions and energy," which could help Utah leverage federal dollars and capitalize on its vast geothermal and solar resources, said Tim O'Connor, a climate change policy analyst at the Environmental Defense Fund.

Steve Caldwell, regional policy coordinator at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, agrees Utah has potential to be a major exporter of clean energy.

"You're one of only four states in the U.S. with geothermal. That's nothing to sneeze at," said Caldwell. "And you're in the Western energy grid, which means you're closely tied to markets that have growing demand for renewables."

Utah lawmakers passed legislation this year authorizing a quasi-governmental entity to build transmission lines linking renewables to "the grid." Utah also is wooing green manufacturers with tax incentives.

"That's important," said O'Connor, stressing there's a whole supply chain out there that Utah's chemical and carbon fiber makers could feed. "It's not just the companies who are producing whole-cloth wind turbines."

Learn more: Economic shifts

Utah » The state's future in the green economy could hinge on its natural resources.

Maps of "renewable energy zones" in Utah and elsewhere are available at

dagrc.utah.gov/urez/

Nation » www.geni.org/globalenergy/library/national_energy_grid/united-states-of-america/americanationalelectricitygrid.shtml

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