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Crack the books to get a green job

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26 AUG 2009 • by [Steve Luxton](#)

The definition of a "green" job is one that pays a livable wage and has a net positive impact, either direct or indirect, on the environment, according to [Wake Tech's Green Jobs Web page](#).



That seems reasonable. But in this recession, in which hundreds of thousands of people are out of work and many new college graduates are starting their careers, is a green job a viable path to real work? It appears to be. From 1998-2007, the number of clean energy jobs in North Carolina increased to nearly 17,000, according to a [Pew study \(PDF\)](#). And it appears new green jobs are on track to be created with help from federal stimulus money.

The [North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association \(NCSEA\)](#) expects the state to receive \$6.1 billion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's \$789.5 billion in stimulus funds. This investment has the potential to create or save roughly 105,000 jobs in North Carolina over the next two years, according to NCSEA. That's a lot of jobs. But what kind of jobs are we talking about? And who gets them?

In addition to executive positions, there will be entry-level jobs, including those that require specific skills in clean energy, energy efficiency, training and support. Wake Tech is touting its traditional training programs in technical areas, such as plumbing, mechanical and electrical trades, where it is believed there will be employment opportunities, although the jobs don't yet exist. The premise is to enroll now and be positioned upon graduation to convert your newfound knowledge into a green technology job, especially when construction dollars begin flowing again.

Then there's solar. Thanks to the state's Renewable Energy Portfolio, passed two years ago, North Carolina is one of the entries into the solar sweepstakes. The 2007 law requires utility companies to generate more than 12 percent of its electricity with renewable resources and buy energy created by outside sources.

One of the largest solar farms in the country is being developed by [Duke Energy](#) and Sun Edison of Maryland in Davidson County. It will reportedly generate enough electricity to power 2,600 homes. During its first year, it could offset 32 million pounds of carbon, equivalent to removing 3,168 cars from the road, according to the [News & Record](#). It could employ 80 people during construction, but only three to keep the plant running. It's not a recession-buster, but it's a start. And it's green.

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