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New Report: Hawaii Ranks 3rd in the Nation in Solar Power

Honolulu – Today, Environment America’s Research & Policy Center released *Lighting the Way: What We Can Learn from America’s Top 12 Solar States*, a new report highlighting a solar energy boom across the country. The report ranks Hawaii 3rd in the nation per capita for solar installations. This makes Hawaii one of a dozen states that have led the nation in solar energy with supportive policies and a commitment to continued expansion. Last year, solar capacity in Hawaii grew by 57%, bringing it to a total of 191 Megawatts.

“Environment America’s ranking of Hawaii as a leader in solar energy is encouraging and demonstrates our state’s commitment to achieving its clean energy goals,” said Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie. “Continuing our momentum, I recently enacted legislation to establish Hawaii’s innovative Green Energy Market Securitization (GEMS) program, which will provide a financing model to make clean energy improvements more affordable and within reach to underserved members of our community. This includes small businesses, nonprofits, community organizations and individuals. Utilizing all facets of our diverse renewable energy landscape is key, and we are succeeding in removing barriers to allow a greater segment of our community to invest in and benefit from clean, alternative resources such as solar.”

“The sky’s the limit on solar energy,” said Rob Sargent, Energy Program Director at Environment America. We commend Hawaii’s leadership on solar. Our message today is clear: If you want your state to be a leader in pollution-free solar energy, set big goals and get good policies on the books.”

The report emphasizes that it is not availability of sunlight that makes states solar leaders, but the degree to which state and local governments have created effective public policy for the development of the solar industry.

- 11 of the 12 have strong *net metering policies*, which allow customers to offset their electricity bills with onsite solar, and receive reliable and fair compensation for the excess electricity they provide to the grid.
- 11 of the 12 states have *renewable electricity standards*, requiring utilities to provide a minimum amount of their power from renewable sources; and nine of them have *solar carve outs*, which set specific targets for solar or other forms of clean onsite power.

- 10 of the 12 have strong statewide *interconnection policies*. Interconnection policies reduce the time and hassle required for individuals and companies to connect solar energy systems to the grid.
- The majority of the states allow for *creative financing options* such as third-party power purchase agreements and property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing.

Solar is on the rise across the country. According to the [U.S. Solar Market Insight: 2012 Year-in-Review](#) report by the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and GTM Research, America had more than three times as much solar capacity as it did in 2010, and more than 10 times as much as it did in 2007. To boot, SEIA also found that the price to install a solar system fell by 26 percent in 2012.

Other states profiled in the report include: Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina and Vermont.

While these twelve states account for only 28 percent of the U.S. population, they make up 85 percent of the nation's installed solar energy.

"More and more, homes and businesses are turning to solar as a pollution-free energy source with no fuel costs," said Sargent. "With the increasing threat of global warming, we must maintain momentum."

Environment America was joined by, GreenSun Hawaii in releasing the report.

"Environment America's report is encouraging confirmation that Hawaii is well on its way to meet its clean energy initiative goal of achieving 70% clean energy by 2030. We continue to seek innovative ways to underwrite and capitalize energy improvements to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel," stated Gwen Yamamoto Lau, President of the Hawaii Community Reinvestment Corporation a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution and administrator of the GreenSun Hawaii program.

"Today we gather to celebrate the solar success of our state but also to remember that we cannot lose the momentum we have gained," Sargent concluded. "Right now only a small fraction of our energy comes from the sun. By setting bold goals and adopting strong policies to back up them up, Hawaii can and will maintain the momentum it has gained and continue to pave the way for the rest of the country. In order to achieve these goals, we need the continued commitment from our state leaders to keep enabling policies to further increase solar development in Hawaii."

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Environment America is the federation of 29 state-based, citizen supported environmental advocacy organizations working toward a cleaner, greener, healthier future.