

The Growth in 'Green-Collar' Jobs

Even in a shaky economy, there are expanding opportunities in environmentally friendly industries.

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NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

Updated: 10:50 AM ET Apr 8, 2008

Paul McAnally never planned on becoming a "green-collar" worker. A former Navy shipbuilder, McAnally, 47, lost his job with a plumbing contractor when the housing market slumped. The Pennsylvania father of six was on unemployment benefits when he heard about Gamesa, a Spanish-owned wind energy company that two years ago started making turbines at a former U.S. Steel plant near Philadelphia. He was hired to build nacelles, the giant structures that house turbines' electricity-generating equipment. When he took his children for a factory tour recently, says McAnally, "they were expecting to see a windmill from Holland" and were amazed instead to see colossal steel towers 300 feet tall and sleek fiberglass blades. "I was able to tell them, 'We're making these turbines for your future'," says McAnally. "'So you can have clean energy'."

The presidential candidates all tout green-collar jobs like McAnally's as part of their plans to combat climate change-and to buoy the sagging economy-by investing heavily in energy sources such as wind and solar that do not generate greenhouse gases. As they crisscross Pennsylvania before its Democratic primary this month, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama stopped in at Gamesa, which has hired 1,300 people in the state in the last two years, to pitch their plans for boosting the alternative energy sector. (Obama even autographed a 130-foot windmill blade.) John McCain will hold his own climate-change-and-jobs tour on the West Coast next month.

The candidates' visits say a lot about the appeal of green-collar jobs as a campaign slogan in these anxious times. "Energy prices are going up, greenhouse gases are going up, and the economy is going down," says Van Jones, founder of Green for All, an Oakland, Calif.-based organization that promotes green job training for the poor. "The new president will need to hold the country together through a difficult economic and ecological period."

While much of the hype around the emerging "clean tech" economy has centered on celebrity venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, most of the jobs, says Jones, will be created in less glamorous sectors: weatherizing homes and offices, installing solar panels and retrofitting factories with energy-efficient technologies. "This is not an eco-elite, eco-chic movement for people who can afford to buy hybrid cars and shop at Whole Foods," says Jones. "The green economy to come is going to be a broad-shouldered, mass movement of American labor."

Already there are strange bedfellows. Last year the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club formed a partnership, the Blue Green Alliance, to promote green job incentives and environmentally friendly trade policies. "It's not a question of jobs or the environment," says Dave Foster, the group's executive director. "It's both or neither." The alliance lobbies Congress and states to pass aggressive renewable energy standards, which require that a certain percentage of electricity be generated from nonfossil sources such as wind or solar.

The guaranteed market for renewable energy, advocates say, means green tech start-ups grow faster-and hire more workers. (Though defining green-collar is still tricky for the purposes of designing tax incentives. If a miner extracts coke that makes steel used to assemble a wind turbine, says Foster, everyone in the production chain can be counted as a green-collar worker. But not if that steel is instead molded into a Hummer.)

Both Clinton and Obama say they'll cut tax breaks for oil companies and invest about \$150 billion over the next decade to promote a green energy sector. Revenues from a carbon "cap and trade" system will pay for job training, weatherization and other efficiency measures along with alternative energy research. Both candidates claim they can add about 5 million jobs to the economy. McCain offers no precise figures but says he will promote policies that help develop

alternative energy and then "let the consumers choose the winners."

Though definitions and economic estimates vary widely, advocates say green jobs can revitalize whole communities. In Richmond, Calif., a gritty industrial city in the Bay Area, a city-sponsored program teaches underprivileged youth how to install solar panels. Graduates like Rodney Lee, now a project manager for a solar firm, earn \$18.50 an hour. Thanks to city incentives, the once-abandoned Ford Motor plant on the city's waterfront has been made over with bamboo floors and skylights into the headquarters of SunPower Corp., a firm that designs industrial solar roof installations. "With the right investments," says Jason Walsh of Green for All, "the resulting green economy can generate a lot of good jobs at a far greater scale than a pollution-based economy." And that's no hot air.

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