

## **Tax credits aid power pioneers**

**Our view: Edison's ambitious plan to install solar panels on 2 square miles of Inland Empire warehouse rooftops is a winner.**

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Southern California Edison's plan for a huge solar-panel power project on Inland Empire warehouse roofs is brilliant in its simplicity.

The ambitious project is awaiting approval by the Public Utilities Commission, which will look closely at the first phase of the project in Fontana.

Contractors working for Edison are installing solar panels on a ProLogis distribution center's 600,000-square-foot rooftop there. The \$7 million project will produce about 2 megawatts of electricity, enough to supply about 1,300 households at a point in time.

Edison leases the rooftop from ProLogis, thereby enabling the distribution company to collect revenue from an asset that just sits there and bakes in the sun anyway. And Edison derives a reliable "power plant" - except for those rare rainy or cloudy days we occasionally have.

Once that project is up and producing electricity, we would hope the PUC would grant speedy approval of Edison's plan to lease about 2 square miles on 100 to 150 warehouse rooftops over a five-year period. The solar panels installed on all those sun-baked roofs would produce 250 megawatts, enough to power 162,000 households, according to Edison.

That's huge, more than 16 times as large as the biggest photovoltaic facility in the country now.

"The opportunity of turning these rooftops into potential renewable energy sources is unlimited," said developer Al Sahabi, whose SE Corp. is based in Corona. He's a driving force behind the Green Valley Initiative, the campaign to improve the Inland Empire's social, economic and environmental quality of life through sustainable development.

Meanwhile, Pacific Gas & Electric announced earlier this month that two Bay Area companies plan to build huge solar plants near San Luis Obispo that would produce 800 megawatts between them.

But both companies have said they cannot move forward with their projects unless Congress extends the investment tax credit for solar energy. The 30 percent solar tax credit, which has spurred improvements in solar cells' efficiency and helped to lower their cost, Congress has failed to pass the extension eight times this year. The extension has been caught up the partisan battle over extending President Bush's tax cuts that will expire in 2010.

Everyone sees the economic and security advantages in promoting the United States' energy independence from foreign oil sources. Extending the solar tax credit is a way to do that with no downsides.

Congress needs to extend the solar credit as quickly as possible to remove the uncertainty and let companies - and homeowners - move forward with their electricity-generating plans.