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Solar-Powered Change

Many people rely on petroleum for their energy, but the money is shifting away from oil towards a cleaner energy source. Solar panels are becoming more mainstream, as Alaska is finding out quickly. This year, four engineers have undertaken the task of creating a 408-panel solar power array, which they plan on using for energy in early or mid-September (Holmes). This project is only meant to be a test-run, hopefully acting as a launchpad for future development in the use of solar in Alaska (Holmes).

“Solar power is still relatively new in Alaska,” says Chris Pike, a research scientist at the Alaska Center for Energy and Power (Holmes). The engineers who pioneered this project put in the time and effort because they believe in climate change and want to encourage others to convert to solar, too (Holmes). “Petroleum powered the 20th century, and we’re in the 21st century,” states Sam Dennis, an investor in Renewable IPP, the company building the project, and a former project manager at BP (Holmes).

Not only is solar power more environmentally sustainable, but it is much easier to develop (Holmes). According to Dennis, while developing solar is repetitive, every oil mining location is different (Holmes). You must be sensitive to the type of oil field being developed, but you can do the same thing for solar repeatedly (Holmes).

The oil industry in Alaska currently accounts for approximately seven percent of the nation’s domestic oil production (Capozzi). The oil industry is also one of the largest suppliers of jobs in Alaska, with 20 connected jobs to every one oil industry job; it is also one of the largest unrestricted revenue sources for the state (Capozzi). Alaska is run by the oil industry, so converting to solar energy could cause many to lose their jobs. However, there will likely be an

opening in solar jobs, which could possibly alleviate the effects of climate change on the world if other states and nations follow suit.

Works Cited

Capozzi, Kati. "Oil and Gas." *Resource Development Council*, www.akrdc.org/oil-and-gas#facts.

Holmes, Loren. "Commercial Solar Is about to Become a Reality in Alaska." *Anchorage Daily News*, Anchorage Daily News, 3 Sept. 2018, www.adn.com/alaska-news/environment/2018/09/03/commercial-solar-is-about-to-become-a-reality-in-alaska/.