

Fill'er Up, with the Sun

by Sheila Cedervall, LEED AP

With the heartbreaking imagery of wildlife covered with oil fresh in our memories from last summer's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, many of us would like to avoid the consumption of fossil fuels. However, until now there seemed to be no viable alternative to the petroleum powered family automobile. As a new generation of electric cars rolls out, some local residents are replacing the gas pump with clean, renewable solar energy generated in their own home.

San Diego and Los Angeles are two of 16 cities across the nation selected to participate in the EV Project, a \$230 million federal government plan to build an infrastructure of 1500 electric car charging stations in each city. To alleviate "range anxiety" two types of stations will be offered: fast chargers located along freeways, at gas stations and coffee shops will provide 12 to 15 miles worth of energy in five minutes, while slower stations located in shopping malls and places of employment will offer the same amount of energy in 20 minutes. These stations coincide with the introduction of three electric powered



Candelaria Solar Electric recently installed this 12 kW solar power system in San Clemente.



The electric powered 2010 Nissan Leaf has zero emissions and a range of 100 miles.

of 68 - 120 miles per eight hour charge, the higher end of the range attainable in downhill stretches, or where stop-and-start traffic utilizes the regenerative braking system. The vehicle can reach speeds up to 90 mph, and features Bluetooth technology which automatically sends a sig-

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cars: the Nissan Leaf, Chevy Volt and a plug-in version of the Toyota Prius hybrid.

The first of these available to consumers will be the Nissan Leaf. San Diego Gas and Electric has partnered with 1,000 consumers on the wait list for the Leaf, providing installation of home charging stations at no extra cost. The Leaf has a range

nal to the driver's smart phone communicating the amount of miles left per charge. Solar panels located on the spoiler run the lights and air conditioning, and zero emissions (no tail pipe) round out the list of environmentally friendly features.

San Marcos residents Ladd and Maria

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This 5.2 kW system recently installed in San Juan Capistrano covers 100% of the household electrical usage.

McCoy are on the wait list for the Leaf, deciding on the vehicle primarily for economic reasons. The vehicle's price of \$32,780 msrp is reduced by a \$7,500 federal and \$5,000 California state rebate for

a net price of \$20,280. Maria was pleasantly surprised by the acceleration offered by the Leaf compared to her Honda Civic during a recent test drive, noting that her insurance agent calculated a 10% monetary savings as well.

Nearing retirement age, the McCoy's have eliminated both their electric bill and the cost for charging their car by purchasing a solar power system installed by local San Clemente contractor Candelaria Solar Electric, Inc. An electrical engineer, Ladd estimates the Leaf will require 100 kilowatt hours a month to power Maria's daily



The Leaf's home charging system, powered by the sun.

commune to Scripps's Medical Center in La Jolla where she is employed as a surgical nurse. The couple decided to purchase the solar power system now while they can take advantage of the 30% tax credit, as well as the SDG&E rebate which is likely to be completely exhausted during 2011.

As battery technology evolves and the driving range offered by electric vehicles is improved, it's likely many motorists will abandon gasoline powered cars for more environmentally friendly vehicles in the future. Here in southern California where optimal solar exposure is enjoyed

and high electricity rates are endured it makes sense economically and environmentally for electric car owners to "fill'er up with the sun." ☀



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