



Now hiring: Eco-friendly companies growing jobs

By Barbara Grady, Business Writer
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SO, YOU'VE CHANGED the light bulbs in your house to compact fluorescents, tuned up your bicycle to commute with and convinced your spouse that the next car should be a hybrid.

But all this is not enough, you think.

You want to put your heart and soul into green, your life's work.

Well, as it turns out, now is an opportune time to look for jobs in the "green" sector.

Want ads on green job boards are bursting. Meanwhile, the city of Oakland, the state of California and the nation are all gearing up to invest in green job training programs and job opportunities.

Most importantly, green companies — from solar panel installers to nonprofits to utilities — are offering environmentally friendly jobs.

"It was not too hard to predict a few years ago that this green tech boom was coming. We are now seeing the early part of the big wave" in this boom, said Ian Kim, coordinator of the emerging Oakland Green Jobs Corps initiative, a city-funded program to build a job training program for low-income youth in Oakland.

"Venture capital investment in green business is off the charts right now," Kim said.

Indeed, the National Venture Capital Association added "clean tech" as an investment category it would report on this spring, after reporting \$264 million was invested in 23 green or clean technology companies by U.S. venture capitalists in the first quarter of this year. That was a 41 percent increase just from the prior three months. And in all of 2006, U.S. venture capitalists invested \$1.5 billion in clean tech investments, a record, the association said.

Meanwhile, the National Resources Defense Council and Environmental Entrepreneurs forecast that venture capital investment in California clean technology companies through 2010 could seed 52,000 to 114,000 jobs in the sector.

"Now is a better time to look for a green job than any time I can remember," said Tim Sears, co-founder of **GRID Alternatives**, a San Francisco startup that helps provide solar installations in urban low-income areas and which will take part in the Oakland Green Jobs Corps initiative. Like most new fields, solar installation requires special training, which the Oakland

JOBSIBusiness 3Green Jobs Corps hopes to provide and which **GRID Alternatives** provides to volunteers. Under the plan, the Oakland Green Jobs Corps would contract with job training programs to teach skills related to biofuels, solar energy and fuel cell mechanics.

"Solar installation is a very rapidly growing industry, and it's an industry that by definition has to have local people," Sears continued.

Solar-provided electricity demand, measured in megawatts delivered by solar photovoltaic installations, rose 19 percent last year globally to 1,744 megawatts of power, according to Solarbuzz.com, a Web site about solar power.

The U.S. Congress will consider a bill next week that would mirror the Oakland jobs training program on a national scale.

And California Lt. Gov. John Garamendi last week outlined an eco-sustainable business investment plan for California in his role as chair of the California Commission for Economic Development.

SolarCity Corp. in Foster City is advertising lots of jobs, including solar panel installers and a project manager, financial analyst.

San Jose-based SunPower Corp., which in January acquired PowerLight Corp. in Berkeley, and Akeena Solar Inc. of Los Gatos also are looking for installers.

New Leaf Paper of San Francisco is looking for customer service representatives to sell its environmentally sensitive paper products.

Global Footprint Network in Oakland is looking for a director of technical programs. The Green Chamber of the Bay Area is looking for a "co-director" to build up its membership.

IBM Corp. employs about 1,000 people in its Project Big Green to advise computer-using companies on how to cut energy usage.

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. announced this week that Solel Solar Systems Ltd. will build a massive solar park in the Mojave Desert from which it will buy power. The Mojave Solar Park will be the world's largest solar installation.

Even the California Public Utilities Commission is offering "green" jobs, posting want ads for utilities engineers to develop recommendations for energy and water conservation regulations.

Science Applications International Corp. in Oakland is looking for scientists to work on sustainable recycling programs.

A good source for finding green employment is GreenBiz.com, a resource Web site with a jobs board.

Even big companies are investing and hiring for green technologies. DuPont recently announced a \$50 million expansion in solar panel making facilities. General Electric Co., the largest U.S. wind turbine manufacturer in the United States, also makes solar and fuel cell equipment.

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Taulafo Laulu, construction assistant for **GRID Alternatives**, inspects an Oakland house with newly installed solar panels.