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UCLA, LA Business Council study feed-in tariff for LA's renewable energy plan

March 19, 2010 | Molly Peterson | KPCC

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The LA department of water and power hopes to spur interest in solar power with a rate hike that will help pay for renewable energy. A study from UCLA has examined how well part of that plan would work. KPCC's Molly Peterson has more.

At UCLA's Luskin center for public policy, researcher J.R. DeShazo has studied something called a feed-in tariff. It's a policy that allows homeowners and businesses to install solar panels or wind turbines on their properties to serve their power needs. Then when there's excess energy, people can sell it back to their local utility, like the DWP. Energy users will take a financial hit as more expensive renewable energy replaces cheaper coal. De Shazo says a feed-in tariff policy could minimize that hit if it's designed right. "If it focuses only on residential solar that's going to be very very expensive. If it focuses only on municipally installed in-basin solar, that's going to be the second most expensive," DeShazo says. "The cheapest is going to be allow large scale commercial solar installations."

De Shazo says the best deal for ratepayers would be to allow people to provide 50 megawatts of this feed-in tariff power back to the DWP each year for a decade. That scenario is not exactly what the mayor and the DWP have talked about so far. DeShazo and the LA business council have shown their research to city officials, business leaders and environmental groups. Their study will come out next month.

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By Corey Bridwell | Art | Pasadena



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