**Local Solar Electricity: Who Gets the Free Ride?**

***Contributed by Gerry Braun***

Our plan was to focus on local solar electricity as a main topic in this issue. My related projects aren’t quite at the point where I can comfortably talk about them, but they are coming right along. By way of preview, the important integration discussion I can provide (in the next issue) will focus on choices available to local solar customers, especially the economic trade-offs. I may also comment further on the recent movement within the US and California electric utility industries to erect economic barriers to solar electricity deployment that is now moving too fast for their comfort.

In the meantime I will try to make sense of what I read in the newspaper. For example, a recent report commissioned by California regulators apparently puts some large numbers on the “extra grid costs” being paid by present and future non-solar customers because a still small number of solar customers are supposedly getting a free ride.

The information I have on this topic supports a contradictory conclusion that it is the residential solar customers that are actually paying the extra costs. My residential electricity bill shows that I pay about 13 cents per kilo-Watt hour for electricity from the grid regardless of when I use it. My smart meter information shows that most of my electricity usage is in evening periods. So, the electricity my new rooftop solar electricity system produces will feed into the grid, mostly during peak daytime demand periods, will be credited to me at the 13 cent rate. Meanwhile, my church, which uses much more electricity than I do, and pays for it on a time of use tariff, will be charged 45 cents for each on-peak kilo-Watt hour solar customers deliver to PG&E at the 13 cent price. So, who is getting a free ride? Seems to me it is the non-solar customers.

It would be good to know whether the folks at the CPUC that are paid with ratepayer funds to advocate for ratepayers in California understand the above story and are advocating in the right direction.