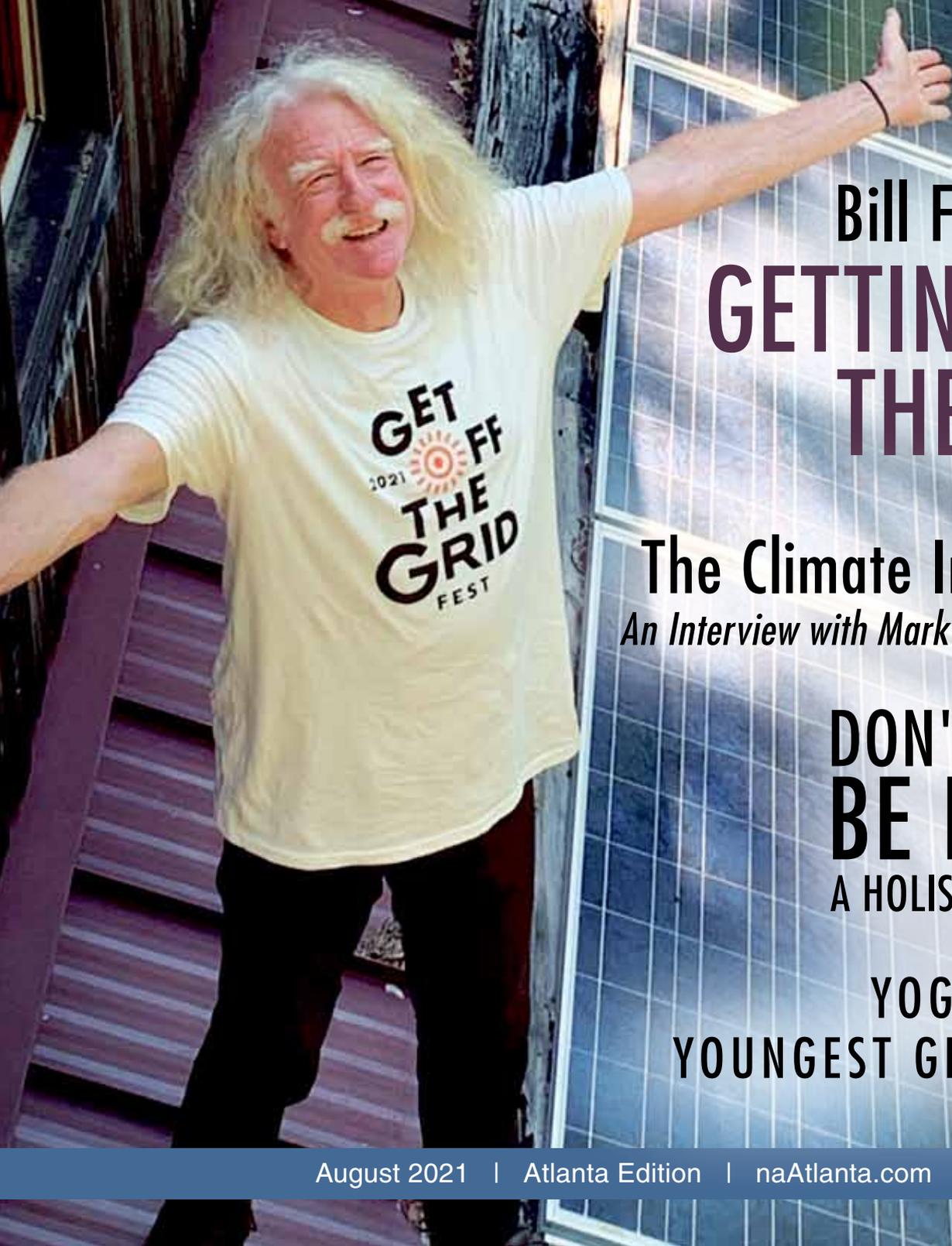


FREE

HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

natural awakenings



Bill Fleming on
**GETTING OFF
THE GRID**

The Climate Imperative
An Interview with Mark Jacobson, Ph.D.

**DON'T WORRY
BE HAPPY**
A HOLISTIC APPROACH

**YOGA FOR THE
YOUNGEST GENERATION**

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COVER PHOTO

Our cover shot of Bill Fleming, co-founder of Get Off The Grid Fest and the Heartwood Community in Blue Ridge, Georgia, was taken by Lynn Marie Dwyer, an accomplished folk artist specializing in primitive clay. Lynn is a 10-year member of Heartwood and is building a tiny home and studio which she designed, utilizing many reclaimed and unique materials. The location is the roof of Bill's completely off-the-grid home in Heartwood. Construction of the 4,000-sf home began in 2011 and was completed in 2015.

CORRECTIONS: In the July issue news brief, "Raw Chef Winners Crowned:" the correct spelling of the first name of the second-place winner is Chandra; Larese Dockery's last name was misspelled in the caption; the recommended URL for IAMOH Herbals is www.iamohherbals.com. Also, in "CSA Senior Minister Passes Away," the year of Roy Eugene Davis' passing was 2019, not 2018. And in "CBD Joint... Second Locations," Roz Grigger was incorrectly identified as the sole founder. In fact, Grigger cofounded the company with Debora Herndon. Grigger is now sole owner.

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BILL FLEMING
 COMMUNITARIAN,
 ACTIVIST, MUSICIAN
 AND ALL-AROUND GOOD GUY

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Scenes from a 4th Grade Camping Trip on Bill Fleming's Land Trust

First, full disclosure: Bill Fleming, environmental activist, co-founder of Get Off the Grid Fest and the subject of our cover story, is a friend of mine. We've known each other for over two decades; our kids were in the same class for 12 years. We don't talk often or visit much, but we get on extremely well.

If anyone has ever walked his talk, it's Bill. For many years he drove what seemed like an ancient Chevy Suburban. It was special, though; it used biodiesel fuel. I'm glad I called to make sure I got the story straight; my memory of a conversation was that he would drive up to McDonald's restaurants, pick up some of their used cooking oil, and pour it into his tank. It turns out that was incorrect; the oil first must be converted into usable fuel. Bill was buying fuel from someone who visited places like McDonald's and then processed the oil into usable fuel.

Bill is always willing to lend a hand in big and meaningful ways. When I shared 4th-grade class parent responsibilities with another parent, we asked Bill to host the annual camping trip on his land, and he said "yes" immediately. When my son chose to make his 8th-grade cello recital a fundraising event for Southface Institute, Bill agreed to play on several songs. When I had friends interested in the community he was building, he took the whole day to show them around. And when I wanted to throw my former wife, Pam, an unforgettable 60th birthday party, he was all in with his band. Not only did he lend the occasion his always-on, upbeat energy, Bill, with no prompting from me, wrote her a personalized birthday song.

So, when Bill called to ask about support for Get Off the Grid Fest, it was an easy "yes" to support him. First and foremost, the topic of natural, sustainable living falls well within our editorial scope. I also knew that Bill presents only fabulous events. The only real hesitancy was that the Fest would be held in Chattanooga—not exactly within our franchise distribution zone. But it's only a couple of hours away, and the music in and of itself would be a draw.

Now that I know more about it, I couldn't be more positive about recommending readers make the drive to Chattanooga. For sure, you're going to learn useful things. And for sure, you're going to have fun. But most of all, the festival addresses the most important issue facing all of humanity right now: We all need to learn how we can do our part in saving this planet from ourselves.

Bill, thank you for being you and for doing all you can to ensure that this existential crisis will be put behind us.

I've turned over responsibility for this letter to our managing editor for a while; she'll be back in September. But I want to make a plug for retreats, the subject of last month's cover story.

Here at *Natural Awakenings*, we're all about stimulating and accelerating awakening, and retreats have played a huge part in my awakening.

All of the retreats I've taken have been spiritual in nature. One time, as our group was coming out of meditation, our retreat leader asked how the meditation went. Catching the look on my face, he noted that I must have had a good one. Indeed. It was the first time I arose from meditation with pure joy exploding from my heart. I remember grinning from ear to ear and not being able to stop.

Another time, I experienced one of the very few times that I received an intuitive download of truth. Until recently, I have not done anything to develop, much less pay attention to, my intuition. While the experience only lasted a few moments, the amount of information received about the nature of my relationship with someone very close to me was quite significant.

Retreats should be on everyone's shortlist of essential self-care practices. Take one or two a year, whether personal in nature or led by a facilitator. Resting, reflecting and renewing: we all need a lot more of them.



Paul Chen has been owner/publisher of *Natural Awakenings Atlanta* franchise since January 2017. He is a practicing Buddhist and a founding member of East Lake Commons, a cohousing community.

Get Off the Grid Festival's BILL FLEMING

Weaving Community, Activism and Music into a (Solar) Powerful Weekend

by Noah Chen



Photos: Lynn Marie Dwyer

This month, on the sunny fields of Camp Jordan in Chattanooga, Tennessee, thousands of people will gather to laugh, lounge and luxuriate in the atmosphere of Get Off the Grid Fest. While on the surface it might appear to be just another music festival, Get Off the Grid Fest is one of the Southeast's premier demonstrations of the efficacy of solar power and the power of music and activism. It is the result of the efforts of former Atlantan Bill Fleming, an accomplished musician, activist and community-builder, his partner and festival co-founder Ed Witkin, and the passionate team that surrounds them.

The festival's three stages run entirely on solar power as do its other activities, including dance parties, educational seminars, equipment demonstrations and interactive displays. Witkin, who also manages the solar generators that power the festival, estimates they'll use the same amount of electricity it would take to power three or four houses to supply the festival's three days.

In addition to being a demonstration of what is possible with solar power, Fleming, 69, sees his music festival as proof positive of other "powers"—namely, those of community and activism.

Get Off the Grid Fest is the culmination of one of Fleming's lifelong interests. "It started back in 1971 with one of the very first Earth Days," he says. "I organized it with a bunch of other people back in Jacksonville. Back then, environmental activism was very subversive. We had the Jacksonville police come out and take pictures of our license plates."

It was the sense of community that fueled Fleming's interest in environmental issues and sustains his passion. "We felt like

we were moving together as a group," says Fleming. "A lot of it had to do with the Vietnam War. You know, we were cannon fodder for that war," he says, referring to the draft.

Both the deterioration of the environment and the threat of being drafted affected many people in Fleming's circle, and both inspired his activism.

Fleming also had an interest and talent in music. That got him thinking.

"The best way to build a community or sustain a movement is through song," says Fleming.

"We've seen it time and time again. The anti-war movement was full of songs. The Bread and Roses movement [of 1912] was led by women seeking better pay, and they sang and wrote songs." He wanted to follow in their footsteps by creating a community and engineering social change through the power of song. But he wasn't going to do it alone.

In 1985, spurred on by their joint interest in politics and music, Fleming met Witkin. They began playing music together and formed the PAND Band—short for "Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament."

Witkin had other interests besides music, including solar power. "Ed is my solar guru," says Fleming.



"You'd be hard-pressed to find a man who knows more about solar power than Ed." Witkin founded Carrboro Solar Works, LLC, and has been involved in solar projects with many others, including activist/singer Pete Seeger.

In the late 80s, Witkin had been tinkering with solar technologies and modified a Volkswagen bus so it could run on solar power. The vehicle impressed Fleming and inspired the pair to produce the Alternative Energy Festival in Little Five Points, Georgia, in 1989.

"We got people from all over the state to come and bring things [to the AEF] that had to do with taking care of the environment. So, we just had a festival out there on the field, powered by a solar generator I put together," says Witkin.

"That was the early origins of Get Off the Grid," Fleming recalls.

Fleming, whose ties to Atlanta include teaching at Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College, moved to Little Five Points in 1980 and found the nearby fields to be the perfect place to host a music festival. Though he has since left, Fleming remembers being inspired by the people there.

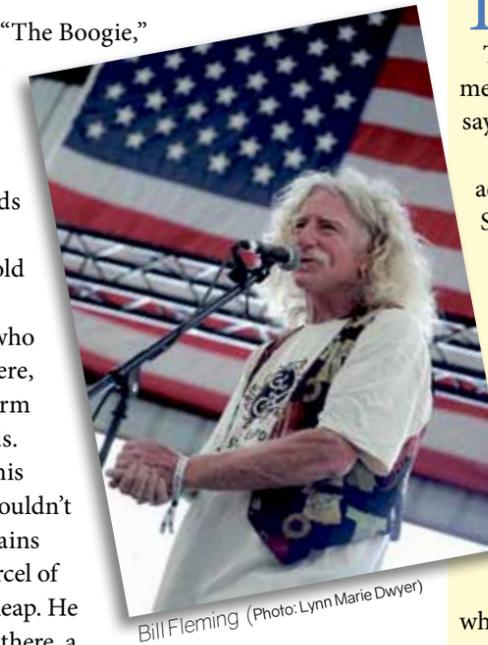
"Atlanta was a fabulous place to raise a family," says Fleming. "We used to do potlucks and festivals, and we did street dances and things like that."

Fleming has also hosted "The Boogie,"

a pre-Fourth-of-July music and dance party, for over 30 years. He describes it as "a party in the woods with 500 of your best friends who you might not have ever met." No tickets are sold and there's no advertising; Fleming says that anyone who shows up is meant to be there, as long as they cause no harm and help pick up afterwards.

Though Fleming recalls his time in Atlanta fondly, he couldn't resist moving to the mountains north of the city when a parcel of land came up for sale for cheap. He built his off-the-grid house there, a move that took him one step closer to the Get Off the Grid Fest.

If the AEF was the start of the Get Off the Grid Fest, Fleming's home and community inspired its current iteration. Tucked away in the mountains of North Georgia, six houses, including his own, sit on a land trust he owns. There, Fleming and his investment partner, Ken Banwart, founded Heartwood, a community where like-minded people can apply to build a house. "Our membership protocol requires that people bring a project to the community, and it has to be something they can't finish on their own," says Fleming. The requirement allows community members to get to know the newcomers and ensures everyone brings something to the table.



Bill Fleming (Photo: Lynn Marie Dwyer)

"We learned that no one can get off the grid by themselves. It takes a community to be off the grid, and we had hundreds of people help us figure out how to do it." The creation of the festival was "an outgrowth of putting [our] experience out there," he explains. "It was so empowering for us. We feel that everyone needs to have access to this."

With the help of dedicated organizers and his solar guru, Fleming produces the Get Off the Grid Fest every two years.

"He definitely trusts other people, depends on their vision and brings them in that way. It's very rewarding," says Glenn Carroll, a partner of the festival and the Coordinator of Nuclear Watch South.

"Another part of it is rock and roll," Carroll says, referring to Fleming's success. "Everybody loves music, and everybody loves to dance. It's like magic."

"Get Off the Grid is my connection to the world at large," says Fleming. "That's how I see my *dharma*. My calling is to make this available to as many people as I can."

Disclosure: Bill Fleming is a friend of the publisher of this magazine.

Get Off The Grid Fest 2021

The third biennial Get Off The Grid Fest (GOTGF) is in Chattanooga this year from August 20 through 22.

The festival's purpose is "to explore and present practical methods of protecting and preserving our natural resources," says its website.

The weekend is packed with presentations and workshops, activities, vending, food and three stages of music, including Saturday night's headliner, Randall Bramlett. Jim Lauderdale headlines Friday night and Brown Eyed Women closes the festival late Sunday afternoon.

GOTGF will feature more than 70 speakers in the areas of energy and environment, health and wellness, food and agriculture and arts and community. The keynote address will be given by Mark Jacobson, Director of the Atmosphere/Energy Program and Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University. Jacobson's work is the scientific basis of the Green New Deal, states the GOTGF website.

Another feature of the festival is the Electric Vehicle Expo, which provides attendees the opportunity to test drive cars. The Health and Wellness Tent focuses on alternative healing methods, such as chiropractic, sound healing, Thai bodywork, CBD, herbs and more. Yoga is offered daily and there are tai chi and qi gong sessions as well.

The Gnome Zone promises fun for the little ones with interactive play spaces, puppeteers and solar-powered toys. The curated art exhibit depicts "the wondrous relationship between human beings and the earth," according to the website.

A three-day pass for the festival is \$60 plus tax, and single-day tickets are \$20 for Friday and Sunday and \$30 for Saturday. Children 16 and under get in free.

For more information, visit GetOffTheGridFest.net.

An Interview with Mark Z. Jacobson on the Climate Change Imperative

by Diane Eaton, MCIS



Mark Z. Jacobson (Photo: Mariaelena Comoroto)

I spoke with Dr. Jacobson about where we are in this enormous effort and what more we need to do. [Lightly edited for space and clarity.]

First things first: How are we doing? You've set the bar at achieving 100% clean, renewable energy nationwide by 2050, but fossil fuels currently produce more than 80% of the nation's energy consumption. We have quite a mountain to climb. Are we on pace to get there?

We're only about 8% there. We've transitioned about 8% of our infrastructure compared to what we need to do to get to 100% renewable energy and heat by 2050 or 80% by 2030. So, we need to do a lot more a lot faster. We can't wait 25 years before we start. We need a rapid transition timeline, and that requires people knowing that the problem is serious enough to convince our policymakers to make laws and regulations that accelerate the transition rapidly.

We have 15 U.S. states and territories that have laws or executive orders to get to 100% renewable electricity—but electricity is only 20% of all end-use energy. There are 176 cities in the U.S. that have

committed to 100% renewables, but that's only electricity, not all energy. We need to involve all energy sectors—transportation, building and industry as well as electricity. It's still progress, but we need a much faster transition than we have now.

President Biden seems to have heard you. His Clean Energy Plan aims to achieve 100% clean energy and net zero emissions by 2050. His budget proposal aims to pour money into clean water, transportation and power infrastructures. Are you encouraged?

He's certainly made progress compared to previous administrations, and I applaud that. But I'm concerned that a lot of money is going toward what I call "all of the above" policies—things that don't really work, like carbon capture, direct air capture, nuclear power, bioenergy and bio-fuels. Those are not going to help solve the climate or air pollution problems. They're money pits.

Researcher, speaker, Stanford University professor and winner of multiple awards for significant contributions to climate research, Mark Z. Jacobson, Ph.D., has spent three decades identifying the fastest, cleanest and most efficient path for all sectors of the U.S. economy to switch to renewable energy production from fossil fuels. In addition to developing scientific models—one has been used by nearly a thousand researchers—he has worked with the Sierra Club, which has, in turn, worked with 176 cities and towns to pass resolutions and laws targeting 100% renewable electricity production. Jacobson is also the keynote speaker at the Get Off the Grid Fest in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on August 20 to 22.

The time is now. Without a huge, comprehensive pivot to renewable energy sources, the Earth's atmosphere will climb to 1.8°F warmer by 2050 than it was at the turn of the 20th century. Climate change is already making a noticeable impact around the globe with record-breaking weather patterns of all kinds. In years to come, no one will remain unscathed from the fallout.

Why is that?

Those other technologies are not efficient, either. They still require some burning of fuels, and they require more energy to run. So, where does that energy come from? From mining and burning more fossil fuels, so you have more air pollution and more mining and more combustion emissions. They're not acceptable solutions.

You've said that we have what we need—the technology and the financial resources—to achieve 100% renewable energy production by 2050. So why aren't we moving faster?

The main barriers to transitioning are not technological or economic. We have 95% of all the technologies we need right now. The cost of energy production is really expensive now, so we'll definitely save money compared with not transitioning. We will reduce energy use so much due to the efficiency of electricity over burning things, and so, because we use so much less

energy, costs will be at least 60% lower with a clean, renewable energy system.

So, why aren't we doing it faster? There are a lot of people still entrenched in the fossil fuel industry, a lot of lobbyists impeding efforts to transition to clean, renewable energy. There's also an information gap. Most people are not aware of what you can do in your own home or in life to make the shift. We need to provide assurances to people that the transition will make their lives the same or better; it will reduce their health impacts, reduce climate impacts. This is needed to convince people to vote for policymakers who will [build] a trend or rapid transition.

Most people are complacent and aren't sure how fast we need to go. They support changes, but they don't realize we need to support policies that require rapid changes, like 80% within nine years.

The cost of renewables—solar especially—is falling rapidly. Is this helping the cause?

Yes, it is driving the purchasing of lots of wind and solar around the world. Certainly, the drop in the cost of renewables, electric vehicles, heat pumps and battery storage has really helped to drive the transition. Something like 94% of all the new installed electricity-generating capacity in the U.S.—from January to April of 2021—was wind, water and solar. That's because the costs have come down and because there are lots of laws and renewable portfolio standards in some states.

Wind energy is one of the technologies within your trifecta solution of what you call "WWS" for wind, water and solar. Many argue that the amount of land needed to provide any significant amount of power from wind turbines is unfeasible and unattractive. How do you answer them?

To power the entire U.S. with wind, water and solar, we only need about 0.6% of the U.S. land mass, and the space between the turbines can be used for agriculture and farmland. In comparison, the fossil fuel industry takes up 1.3% of the land.

Wind is the lowest-cost form of electric-

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

The Earth's atmosphere has warmed by 1°C (1.8° F) since 1900, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and if unimpeded, it will climb to 2°C by 2050. The impact will unquestionably be devastating to human life around the globe. *The New England Journal of Medicine* says that, conservatively, 250,000 people will die each year due to the rising temperature. Other consequences include rising sea levels, coastal flooding, supercharged hurricanes, glacier and sea-ice melting, hotter and more frequent wildfires, longer and deeper droughts, famine, agricultural shifts, migration due to environmental changes, species extinction and more.

FOSSIL FUEL ENERGY PRODUCTION...

- Consumes dwindling natural resources
- Generates deadly pollution and toxins
- Can be mined and monetized only in a few locations
- Will see dramatically increasing prices across all sectors
- Requires installations that damage the terrain
- Comes with disruptions to service and grid instability

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES...

- Use virtually inexhaustible natural resources
- Are available nearly everywhere
- Cause virtually no environmental damage
- Are 60% cheaper than fossil fuels
- Are more energy-efficient than fossil fuel production
- Will not increase in price over time
- Offer grid stability and continuous supply

COMPARING LAND USE

The fossil fuel industry takes up 1.3% of the U.S. land mass. With renewables, only about 0.6% of U.S. land would be needed to power the entire U.S. for all purposes. Plus, any empty space can be used for agriculture and farmland.

PROGRESS IN ATLANTA AND GEORGIA

- Atlanta adopted its Clean Energy Resolution in 2017, with the goal of powering municipal buildings with 100% renewable sources by 2025 and going community-wide by 2035. The Plan focuses on decreasing energy bills, creating jobs, improving air quality and public health and stimulating economic development.
- Georgia is among the top 10 states for solar production and produces more electricity from wood and wood waste than any other state. In 2019, Dalton installed the largest solar panel manufacturing plant in the Western hemisphere. State lawmakers are reticent to put initiatives into law but are supporting businesses in adopting green policies.

YES, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. HERE'S HOW:

1. Next time you buy a car, buy all-electric.
2. Make your home as energy-efficient as possible: Weatherize, seal and insulate.
3. Purchase energy-efficient appliances and switch to LED bulbs.
4. Consider solar panels for your home or solar projects in your community.
5. Buy from a utility company that uses or supports renewable sources.
6. Educate yourself about what is being done in your city and state.
7. Take action: Urge your elected officials to enact renewable energy initiatives.
8. Reduce commute times.

ity in the U.S. by far. It's half the cost of new natural gas, it takes the least amount of physical land on the ground, and it doesn't have any air pollution associated with its operation nor climate-relevant emissions. It's efficient, clean, low-cost. There's really little downside to using it.

Does nuclear play a role in the switch to renewables?

There are a lot of problems with nuclear reactors. For one, it takes too long and they're too expensive to build. The cost is about five times higher per unit of

All these things combined, we can keep the grid stable, we can create jobs, save money, and reduce land use by going to clean renewable energy.

energy compared with wind or solar. There are just a few in the U.S.—two are in Georgia—and it takes an average of 15 to 16 years for planning and operation of any nuclear plant, so if we plan a new one today, it won't be ready until 2037. We can't wait that long. On top of that, there's unresolved waste issues, nuclear weapons proliferation issues, meltdown issues and mining risk issues. Why should we do it?

How can we feel empowered to be a part of the change when it seems like corporations and government have the most control and make the most impact?

It's important to remember that people are buying things that industry is making; people are living in homes that require energy; people are driving and that requires transportation; all sectors are involved with the use of energy by individuals.

So, individuals can do a lot to help solve the problem. First, you don't need both electricity and gas in your home; there's no reason to have two energy sources. It saves you a lot of money not to put gas in your home. If you don't have gas, you don't need to put pipes in, you don't need to pay hookup fees, you don't need to dig ditches for gas pipes. Even if you have gas now, you can retrofit your home by using heat pumps, electric cooktops instead of a gas stove, and electric cars. Whatever you use gas for in your home, you can go through an electric alternative.

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