

## **Salazar trumpets solar energy promise during tour of CSU spinoff**

BY COLORADOAN STAFF • AUGUST 5, 2009

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Looking out over a crowd of excited Abound Solar employees Tuesday afternoon at the company's solar panel manufacturing plant near Longmont, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said he was impressed with the workers' youthful energy.

It's both that exuberance and the energy from the sun that Salazar said he'd like to see the federal government harness as the Interior Department looks for ways to generate renewable energy on public lands throughout the West.

Salazar singled out Abound Solar, a CSU spinoff with offices in Loveland and Fort Collins, as a company that conforms to the fundamentals of the Obama Administration's energy policy. That means creating a plethora of "green" jobs, he said.

Today, Abound Solar, which started in a lab on the Colorado State University campus, employs about 230 people, up from only four in 2007. Its work force is expected to double in size in the coming years, said Julian Hawkins, senior vice president of sales and marketing.

"I am impressed," Salazar said of the company's success. "Just a few years ago, I was (visiting) in a lab in Fort Collins, and I knew this future was coming."

Hawkins said the company's goal is to make solar panels a "volume product," and the government's support makes solar relevant today.

"Secretary Salazar sees the opportunity here," Hawkins said.

Salazar touted the Interior Department's efforts to expedite large-scale solar energy development on public lands. The department, he said, has outlined 24 solar energy study areas on 1,000 square miles of Interior-managed public land throughout the Southwest which, if fully developed, could produce enough energy to power up to 29 million homes.

Four of those areas are on Bureau of Land Management land in Salazar's native San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The plan for solar development on those parcels is currently undergoing environmental review.

Except for national parks and wildlife refuges, Salazar's agency manages little land in the northern Front Range including a few small tracts of BLM land in northwest Larimer County. None of those are slated for solar-energy development.

Some places should be off-limits to solar development, Salazar said.

"You wouldn't put solar at Rocky Mountain National Park or Great Sand Dunes," he said.