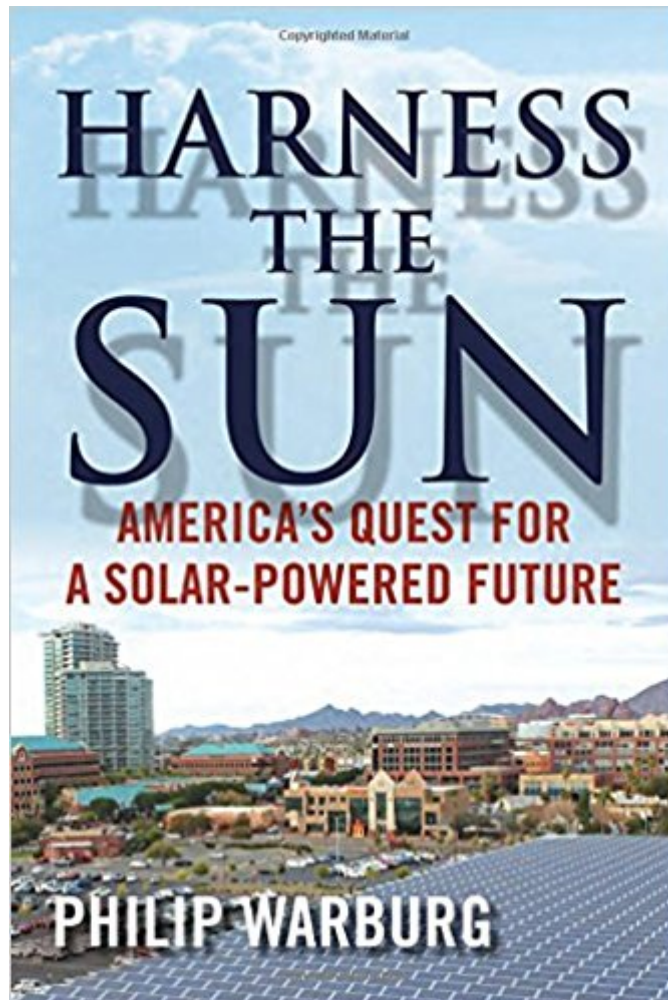




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# Harness The Sun: America's Quest For A Solar-Powered Future



## Synopsis

Going from the inner city to the open desert, a seasoned environmental advocate looks at solar energy's remarkable ascent and its promise for America's future. Solar power was once the domain of futurists and environmentally minded suburbanites. Today it is part of mainstream America. Scan the skyline of downtown neighborhoods, check out the rooftop of the nearest Walmart, and take a close look at your local sports arena. Chances are you'll find solar panels in those and many other unexpected places. In *Harness the Sun*, Philip Warburg takes readers on a far-flung journey that explores America's solar revolution. Beginning with his solar-powered home in New England, he introduces readers to the pioneers who are spearheading our move toward a clean energy economy. We meet the CEOs who are propelling solar power to prominence and the intrepid construction workers who scale our rooftops installing panels. We encounter the engineers who are building giant utility-scale projects in prime solar states like Nevada, Arizona, and California, and the biologists who make sure wildlife is protected at those sites. Warburg shows how solar energy has won surprising support across the political spectrum. Prominent conservatives embrace solar power as an emblem of market freedom, while environmental advocates see it as a way to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, economic-justice activists celebrate solar's potential to lift up low-income communities, and Native American leaders welcome the income and jobs that the industry will bring to their communities. Yet solar energy has its downsides and detractors too. Conservationists worry about the impact of large solar farms on protected animal species, and some local citizens groups resent the encroachment of solar projects on farmland and open spaces. Warburg gives voice to those at the epicenter of these conflicts and points the way to constructive solutions. *Harness the Sun* offers a grounded, persuasive vision of America's energy future. It is a future fueled by clean, renewable sources of power, with solar at center stage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Smoothly edifying.” —Kirkus Reviews “Warburg’s graceful, diverse, wide-ranging, and well-balanced storytelling...[is] a valuable service to a society rife with solar myths, many deliberately manufactured...An important and timely contribution to the public understanding of solar power.” —Amory Lovins, *Science* “Harness the Sun eloquently details the role that solar can and must play in our clean-energy future.” —Peter Lehner, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council “Harness the Sun is an indispensable guide to the technologies that undergird an emerging solar revolution. It describes the businesses that will profit from it, the interests that will be disrupted by it, and the policies that could accelerate it. Phil Warburg does all this by wandering across the land, talking with workers and consumers and CEOs, and asking them exactly the questions that every intelligent, open-minded reader would want to have answered. If you are intrigued by solar energy in concept but think it is just a futuristic option, read this book today.” —Denis Hayes, national coordinator of the first Earth Day and former director of the Solar Energy Research Institute “As an environmental scientist with more than thirty years’ experience, I applaud Philip Warburg for shining much-needed light on the renewable energy potential of contaminated lands. These sites can help expand our clean-energy capacity in places where industry has left a lot more than rust behind.” —Deborah Sawyer, founder and CEO, Environmental Design International, Inc. “Phil Warburg has invented a new literary genre: the clean energy travelogue. His trips to the places and characters behind the solar energy boom are brilliantly entertaining and informative. He has written the definitive guide to America’s solar transformation.” —U.S. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (ret.), former chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee

Philip Warburg is the author of *Harvest the Wind: America’s Journey to Jobs, Energy Independence, and Climate Stability*. He was president of the Conservation Law Foundation, New England’s leading environmental advocacy group, from 2003 to 2009. Previously, he directed the

Israel Union for Environmental Defense in Tel Aviv and was an attorney at the Environmental Law Institute in Washington, DC.

Warburg's book clearly points out that photovoltaic technology is improving and is becoming more economically attractive. As PV further improves and fossil fuels become more scarce and costly, it will be a primary energy source. However, Warburg insufficiently addresses the practical issues that utilities need to deal with when PV energy production becomes a significant percentage of power generation. Solar power is intermittent and not available at night, while utilities need to provide 100% of electric demand at all times - otherwise the grid fails. Warburg is wrong when he states that photovoltaic cells provide most power when demand is near a peak, because peak demand occurs in late afternoon. No PV discussion is complete without coverage of storage (batteries or other) and reserve production capacity needed to fill solar's gaps. Curiously, Warburg tends to label some people "conservative" but fails to label others as "liberal" though he otherwise portrays few political biases.

America is at a tipping point in its energy policy. Which century will we choose to live in, the past or the future? Phil Warburg's "Harness the Sun" makes a compelling case for the future. The advances in solar technology make this renewable energy source an indispensable part of our energy future. It's safe, clean and increasingly affordable. The most conservative fiscal analysis makes clear the need for a more diversified energy portfolio rather than our antiquated reliance on fossil fuels. We can build a new American industry rather than exporting our money and jobs to the Middle East. We can heat our homes and power our cars from our own rooftops rather plundering the planet and polluting our air. It does not depend on Big Government. It depends on each of us. Phil Warburg tells us how we can increase our energy independence and self-reliance.

Simply said, Warburg's eloquent and human scale reporting on our solar energy potential is a **MUST READ**. You'd think that a book on Solar would remind one of a technical manual ---- NO! This book's connection with the movers, shakers, experimenters, everyday folks and forward thinking communities grips you from the beginning. It takes you on a journey that makes YOU think about your grabbing (safely and with the right PV Technology!!) the sun to create a future which makes economical and social sense -- whether you are just a resident of a small or big town in the USA, or a large scale utility powering an important region in America.

As an environmental lawyer with 45 years in the field, I found *Harnessing the Sun* a refreshing mix of spirited narrative and highly informative analysis. In this comprehensive and meticulously researched book, we learn about the (often magnificent) ingenuity and determination of communities, entrepreneurs, engineers, and politicians across the political spectrum. The wonderfully readable, often quite humorous, chapters draw directly from the author's first-hand observations as he travels the country. While objective and solid in its careful examination of the very real technology challenges and policy hurdles, the captivating narrative is also an inspiring and exciting story of humanity and the promise of our future.

It's hard to overstate the importance of Philip Warburg's latest and highly readable book, "*Harness the Sun*." We humans are messing up the planet, irresponsibly burning fossil fuels and causing the globe to warm. Anybody who pines for a saner, safer, and more rational US energy policy should read this book and take its message to heart. Beautifully written and researched, "*Harness the Sun*" shows that solar energy can start playing a much larger role in our national life than we ever imagined -- and is already starting to do so. Powering our homes and economy with massive quantities of solar energy is no longer some futuristic dream. I salute this book for its accuracy, eloquence, passion, and compelling vision. We need to redouble our efforts to reduce our use of carbon-based fuels and leap on to the burgeoning solar energy bandwagon. As Philip Warburg writes at the end of his fascinating book, "The tools for advancing a more sustainable energy future are within our reach. It is our obligation and privilege to use them."

As evidenced by some of the statements in the few negative reviews of this book, there is no shortage of ignorance about the present state of solar power. Until I read "*Harness the Sun*," I shared some of these misconceptions -- solar is probably not right for a cold northern climate; failure to meet utility demand at night makes this technology impractical; you have to shovel snow off the panels. I was wrong about all three. It's not that Warburg cheerleads for solar. He is honest and analytical about its problems and obstacles. But along the way, a reader learns a great deal. Perhaps the biggest breaking news for me is that there are promising ways to store solar energy during the day to generate electricity at night. I found his mix of technical details and stories about the very interesting people involved in solar to be a perfect blend. If you are not technically inclined, enjoy meeting the characters he interviews. If you are, enjoy both. I'd be interested to see wind power (which Warburg has also written about in "*Harvest the Wind*"), solar, and conservation/efficiency analyzed based on their relative costs and environmental tradeoffs, but that

would be outside of the scope of this book. But if Warburg had tried in "Harness the Sun" to convince me that solar (or any form of power generation) is free of such constraints, I would have stopped reading. Instead, he lays out a persuasive case that the United States has a vast untapped resource waiting to be utilized.

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