Calif.’s power solution could be solar

By Puneet Kollipara, Washington Post

Deserts and remote fields are popular spots for building vast arrays of solar panels, which generate dramatically more energy than individual homeowner rooftop installations. These areas are rich in sunlight while offering plenty of clear, flat land to work with. But what if we didn’t always have to go all the way out to these remote and potentially ecologically fragile areas? What if we could simply drive down the street and make use of the buildings and lands in areas we’ve already developed?

A new study suggests that such a strategy could work in a state like California, which is working aggressively to boost its renewable energy use. And it could provide a lot of power. There’s enough space suitable for solar power on or near land that humans occupy in the state to power three to five of today’s Californias, researchers report in Nature Climate Change.

California is a clean energy trailblazer on a number of fronts. It’s a part of a carbon emissions trading program with other Pacific states, and has also set a goal of supplying one-third of its electricity from renewable sources such as solar and wind by 2020, and cutting its carbon dioxide emissions 80 percent by 2050.

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