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You have heard of solar energy, but how about lunar energy??

Scientists are urging governments and businesses alike to look to the moon -- as an energy source. One of the moon's resources is a rare element of helium. A University of Wisconsin researcher says that element is the key to safe, waste-free nuclear energy.

"There are only about 30 kilograms of ^3He on Earth ... The thing is that there are tons of helium-3 -- on the moon. About 1 million tons ... we also have a pretty good idea as to where the ^3He is on the moon. ... it could potentially power the Earth for thousands of years." (Source: [CNN](#))

And Helium 3 isn't the only valuable element up there. [ABC explains](#) why the moon's lack of atmosphere is a bonus.

"The moon is seen as a prime location for solar energy because there is virtually no atmosphere, meaning no bad weather or clouds to keep the sun's rays from the panels... When all the energy created from those panels reaches Earth, there will be no need to produce energy from coal, oil or biomass."

With the end of the shuttle program, the door to space travel is wide open for private companies. Barney Pell of Moon Express, one of those private companies, says the moon has plenty of incentives to excite the private sector.

"Actually the moon is very, very rich in resources. The moon probably has more platinum than in all the mining reserves in planet Earth. ... So you can go out, harvest that platinum and then bring it back." (Video source: [CNET](#))

But NASA isn't totally out of the game -- they're working with those companies and helping develop mining robots. [International Business Times](#) reports NASA's Lunabotics competition challenged 36 teams of students...

"...to design remotely controlled excavators... to determine which could collect the most simulated lunar soil during a specified time frame."

With all the different energy and money making opportunities, lunar robot development could mean huge profits for whoever comes up with the best design. Michael Potter of Odyssey Landing, a company working on a lunar lander, says it's a great time to be in the moon business.

"There's still a tremendous amount we don't know about what we're calling the Eighth Continent. The science community wants to know more and the research dollars will continue to be put in. In a sense, we're looking at ourselves as selling picks and shovels to gold miners." (Source: [The Engineer](#))