



# Solar Gator Groomer Runs on Sunshine

*Information Provided by the NASA Marshall Exchange  
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***What do you get when you join together a battery powered utility vehicle, a high efficiency rugged solar panel, an electrically operated sports field groomer, and a sky full of sunshine?***

How about one lean, green, solar-powered field machine – capable of maintaining the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center’s softball, football, and soccer fields using nothing more than the freely available energy of the sun.



NASA / Marshall Space Flight Center  
Softball Complex MSFC, AL 35812

Model No. **PR72-E-IN-tt-hd-hw**  
Heying Pro Groomer

A unique collaboration between NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC), John Deere Equipment, a leading Solar Panel Company, a Deere Distributor, and **Heying Company** (Infield-Drage.com), along with NASA Marshall Exchange Intramural Sports Clubs has created what’s believed to be the **world’s first Solar Gator Groomer**.

*Jay Hollenbeck, a mechanical engineer in the Facilities Management Office and the field maintenance manager for the MARS Softball Club, prepares the field for the next game using the new Solar Gator Groomer.*

*Shown is a PR72 Electric Lift Pro Groomer by Heying Company, Alton, Iowa USA (www.Infield-Drage.com or www.HeyingCompany.com)*

***Refer to Heying Model No. PR72-E-IN-tt-hd-hw***

This collaboration – led by the NASA Marshall Exchange – sought to integrate several elements that support renewable energy into a unique and novel utility vehicle capable of both versatility and function. “We read and hear a lot about renewable resources – going green”, said Edwin Jones, Operations Manager of the Marshall Exchange. “So when faced with problems, like the demise of our Softball Club’s old garden tractor used to pull a drag mat to maintain our sports fields, we ask ourselves – is there a green solution? You’d be surprised by how many different, innovative ideas people offer, and then at how willing people, organizations, and companies are to work together to make green solutions possible.”

The Solar Gator Groomer has widespread commercial potential. The rugged high efficiency solar panel recharges eight six-volt batteries that power the Gator’s 48 volt DC power train. The infield groomer is an accessory towed behind the Solar Gator that receives its power to lower and raise its levelers and chisels from the batteries in the Gator through a 48 to 12 volt power converter. Any application requiring an intermittent use utility vehicle, such as found in many agricultural, landscaping, and Sports Park uses, is a perfect match for the Solar Gator, since a few hours of sunshine easily replenish the power used by the Gator each day.

*Contributors included John Deere Corporation; Heying Company; the Office of MSFC Center Chief Technologist; the MSFC Environmental Engineering and Occupational Health Office; NASA Recycling; the NASA Marshall Exchange; and the MARS Softball Club, and others.*



*(at left)  
NASA Marshall  
Space Flight  
Center Softball  
Complex, with  
Gator and  
PR72 Pro Groomer.*



*(at right)  
Front of solar  
panel hood on  
John Deere Gator.*

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