

**From:** [Eric Bachrach](#)  
**To:** [SitingBoard Filing \(DPU\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Jo Comerford](#); [mindy.domb](#)  
**Subject:** Stakeholder Comments on Cumulative Impacts Analysis and Site Suitability Criteria for Clean Energy Infrastructure  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 27, 2025 3:47:48 PM

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Dear Siting Board,

I am writing to you to share my concerns regarding solar siting in Massachusetts. I am very committed to finding alternatives to using fossil fuel for energy generation. At the same time, I am equally committed to stemming the destruction of our forests for solar. In Massachusetts, we have vast, but unrealized potential to deploy solar on brownfields, rooftops, over parking lots, and on commercial buildings and residential properties.

It is imperative to conserve our forest ecosystems because they are the only technological means we have to effectively sequester carbon. Aside from this profoundly and critically important function, forests create and preserve biodiversity, purify our water systems, lower ambient temperatures, and oxygenate the air we breathe. Forests also assist in preventing flooding and uncontrolled water runoff during this era of increasing precipitation.

I have attended all of the solar siting hearings and have heard many public concerns about destroying forests for solar. You have elicited public input throughout the siting process. Now is the time to demonstrate that your outreach intentions are genuine and not just performative. Many people have put tremendous time and energy into this issue and I hope that your final decisions will reflect what you heard from the "public" at these "public" forums.

I hope you will incorporate my recommendations below regarding proposed energy siting regulations and guidelines that are in development by the Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) and Department of Public Utilities (DPU):

- 1) "Small" energy projects and all Energy Storage System (ESS) battery systems should only be allowed on the built or disturbed environment. This is

consistent with the recommendations of the Massachusetts Audubon and Harvard Forest report, [Growing Solar, Protecting Nature](#), which analyzed how Massachusetts can meet its solar goals while protecting its most valuable natural and “working” lands.

2) The following areas should be excluded from large and small energy generation and transmission projects:

- Article 97 protected open space, including all Department of Conservation and Recreation state parks and reservations, state forests, watershed forests, and all Division of Fisheries and Wildlife state wildlife management areas. If these lands are categorized as ineligible, an exception should be considered for solar canopies, such as solar panels over a public beach parking lot.
- “Wetland resource areas” (under 310 CMR 10.04), including setbacks of 1,000 feet from identified wetlands resources.
- Properties included in the State Register of Historic Places (950 CMR 71.03), except as authorized by regulatory bodies.
- Areas identified as Massachusetts BioMap 2 Critical Natural Landscapes, Core Habitats, Important Habitats, or Priority Habitats.
- Areas classified as Outstanding Resource Waters, wetlands or rivers.
- Flood plains or flood-prone areas.
- Lands that provide public drinking water.
- Prime farmland (as defined by the state).

3) Ground-mounted solar projects should not be allowed on recently deforested land, defined as lands cleared less than 5 years ago. This is consistent with the recommendation of the Healey administration [Carbon Forestry Committee](#), which concluded that keeping forests as forests is important in reducing carbon loss and mitigating climate change.

4) Marginal farmland should be minimally affected, with no decrease in agricultural productivity.

5) Language should be included that ensures no negative impacts on:

- Native biodiversity, including native plants and animals listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act.
- Protected open space.

- Native American cultural areas, as determined by the Indigenous people of Massachusetts.

6) Power of discretion and authority should be provided to the towns that allows for:

- Locally created and enforceable safety standards for battery storage.
- Town-specific capacity and siting goals, with local control of siting.
- Authority for municipalities to reject any proposal for minimization and/or mitigation that is deemed to be a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of town citizens or to the protection of natural and cultural values in the town, as determined by local boards and commissions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed regulations and guidelines.

Sincerely,

Eric Bachrach

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