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To: [SitingBoard Filing \(DPU\)](#)
Subject: Stakeholder comments
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To the Energy Facilities Siting Board,

Please accept my comments relating to energy siting regulations and guidelines that are in development:

When it comes to Massachusetts' commitment to a successful and equitable transition off fossil fuels and onto clean, truly green energy, the Commonwealth would be well advised to abide by the wise guidance of all the divisions (like DOER and the Healey Administration Carbon Forestry Committee) and organizations (like Mass Audubon) who have done plenty of due diligence about most appropriate siting for large- and industrial-scale solar.

For example,

- 1) The MA Audubon/Harvest Forest Study (2023) that says we can get the required solar buildout on the built environment. Find the report [on our website](#).
- 2) The [Healey Administration Carbon Forestry Committee](#) report that concludes that we should not be converting forested land for energy production. "Reduce unnecessary forest land conversion via collaboration across state agencies and complementary policies, infrastructure investments, and other actions (e.g., solar facilities, powerlines, highways, housing, or other development).... Forest conversion on any given acre results in more carbon loss than harvesting on average, is more permanent, and also results in the loss of all other forest benefits." (page 48)
- 3)The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EEA)(plus associated agencies) [siting report](#) that includes suggestions for what lands should be avoided for the energy build out.

Without prudent, respectful, whole-Commonwealth awareness, the risk is far too great that small rural communities like my own (Shutesbury) will bear far too much of the burden of MA's solar build-out. The Quabbin already took from western MA without giving back (see my Letter to the Editor in the Daily Hampshire Gazette, <https://www.gazettenet.com/Letter-to-the-editor-57542336>). It is your job to ensure

that large solar build-out happens on already-disturbed lands, because the Commonwealth has plenty of that to meet our solar needs. If you decide to allow forest clearcutting in towns like Shutesbury, it will be a generational disservice to the climate-preserving forests here, as well as far too likely to wreck the watershed my own home sits on (as happened in Williamsburg, with the MA-AG successfully sued the developer for).

To this end, I ask you to please include these crucial exclusions and constraints on siting, as follows:

1) "Small" energy projects and all ESS battery systems shall only be allowed on the built or disturbed environment.

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

- Article 97 protected open space (note: If Article 97 land is categorized as an ineligible area, an exception for solar canopies - e.g., solar over a DCR beach parking lot- shall be considered.)
- Wetland resource areas (310 CMR 10.04) and with setbacks of 1,000 feet to identified wetlands resources.
- Properties included in the State Register (950 CMR 71.03), except as authorized by regulatory bodies
- BioMap 2 Critical Natural Landscape, Core Habitat, Important Habitat, or Priority Habitat
- Outstanding Resource Waters, wetlands or rivers
- Flood plains or flood prone areas
- On land that provides public drinking water
- On prime farmland (as defined by the state)

3) Ground-mounted solar projects shall not be allowed on newly deforested land, defined as cleared less than 5 years ago.

4) Marginal farmland shall be minimally impacted with no decrease in agricultural productivity.

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

- Biodiversity including plants and animals listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act
- Protected open space
- Native American cultural areas as determined by Massachusetts' Indigenous people

- 6) Power of discretion and authority shall be provided to the towns that allows for:
- Locally generated 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 are deemed a threat to the towns' health safety and welfare, and natural and cultural resource protections, as determined by local boards and commissions.

Sincerely yours,
Jody Shapiro, PhD

