

August 19, 2019

Secretary Kathleen Theoharides
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Suite 900
100 Cambridge St.
Boston, MA 02114

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Executive Office of Energy
& Environmental Affairs

Commissioner Judith Judson
Department of Energy Resources
Suite 1020
100 Cambridge St.
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Theoharides and Commissioner Judson:

We are writing today to share our story as you do a review of the SMART solar program in Massachusetts. Outside of all the obvious reasons for supporting solar – green jobs, renewable energy and cost savings to consumers – benefits to farms should not be overlooked.

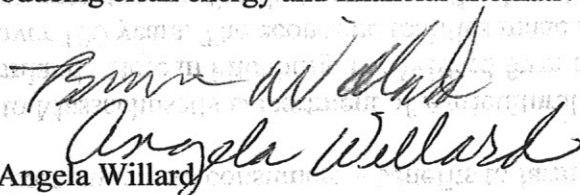
According to Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources there are close to 500,000 acres of farmland. Here in Fitchburg, the Willard farm occupies 45 acres and has been in the family for over 100 years. The economic realities made it difficult to sustain the apple orchard, but it was important to our family to preserve this beautiful woodland and pastureland for generations to come.

A carefully designed solar farm did the trick. Leasing a portion of the acreage for a solar farm helped us to avoid other options – condominium development among them – leaving the land as treasured open space. Although the orchard is no longer part of the landscape, other species inhabit the area.

When you make a living from the land you find yourself confronting a lot of hard choices. What we liked about the solar farm is that in the future our family would have options. After 20 years, the acreage can be put back to its prior state or renegotiated for a longer lease. The solar industry has provided small and large landowners' a way to offset the financial challenges landowners face.

I'm sure we speak for farmers and private landowners across the state – please keep the SMART program producing clean energy and financial alternatives for family agricultural enterprises.

Sincerely,


Angela Willard

Bruce and Angela Willard
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