

Barnicle, Abby (ENE)

From: Mass Audubon <webmaster@massaudubon.org> on behalf of Maria Bartlett
<webmaster@massaudubon.org>
Sent: Friday, October 30, 2020 5:10 PM
To: DOER SMART (ENE)
Subject: SMART ASTGU Guideline Comments

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Oct 30, 2020

Ms. Kaitlin Kelly

Dear Ms. Kelly,

Thank you for your work to expand renewable energy in Massachusetts through improved solar programs and incentives. At a time when we are already seeing the effects of climate change in Massachusetts and around the world, we need to quickly increase our solar capacity to meet our mitigation goals and shift our reliance from fossil fuels to renewable power.

However, I urge you to create some needed safeguards when expanding the siting of solar installations on farmland. Responsible siting is critical and should be limited. Farmland has already decreased by almost 86,000 acres from 1997 to 2017.

While the idea of having a land in "dual use" with solar arrays placed over active farmland sounds attractive, this is still experimental. The total amount of land enrolled in this program should be limited until more information demonstrates that this approach works. If solar is to be sited on farmland, it should be sited on the farmland least suitable for farming, and no conservation restrictions or agreements should be broken or undone for the purpose of solar development. We especially can't accept the loss of forest lands...great carbon sinks.

Thank you for considering these comments. It's exciting to see renewable energy growing across Massachusetts, but we must ensure that it doesn't come at the expense of our irreplaceable natural and working lands.

Sincerely,

Ms. Maria Bartlett
26 Jenkins Road
Andover, MA 01810
(978) 590-0547
maria_bartlett@verizon.net