Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

SITE SUITABILITY ASSESSMENTS FOR CLEAN ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

DRAFT GUIDANCE

Effective Date: TBD

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I. PURPOSE

An act promoting a clean energy grid, advancing equity and protecting ratepayers ("2024 Climate Act") tasks the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) with the development of a methodology for determining the suitability of sites for Large and Small Clean Energy Generation Facilities, Large and Small Clean Energy Storage Facilities, and Large and Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities in newly established Public Rights of Way; and guidance to inform state, regional, and local regulations, ordinances, by-laws, and permitting processes on ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts on the environment and people to the greatest extent practicable.[1]

The following guidance describes the methodology for determining the suitability of sites for Applicable Facilities for use in the review of applications for Consolidated Permits, Consolidated Local Permits, and Consolidated State Permits, pursuant to the 2024 Climate Act.

Additionally, the guidance provides recommendations for using the site suitability methodology in the review of applications for Consolidated Permits, Consolidated Local Permits, and Consolidated State Permits for Applicable Facilities by the Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) and Local Governments, as well as ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on the environment and people to the greatest extent practicable.

This guidance is intended to inform regulations promulgated by the EFSB governing the siting and permitting of Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities and regulations promulgated by the Department

[1] G.L. c. 21A § 30 as inserted by St. 2024 c. 239 § 5.

of Energy Resources (DOER) establishing standards, requirements, and procedures governing the siting and permitting of Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities by Local Governments.

II. GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT

The guidance was developed in consultation with the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity (OEJE), Office of Coastal Zone Management, Office of Climate Science, Department of Public Utilities (DPU), DOER, MassDEP, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Agricultural Resources, and Department of Conservation and Recreation.

A straw proposal for the site suitability methodology was released on May 5, 2025, for public comment.[2] EEA joined the DPU, EFSB, DOER, and OEJE in holding stakeholder sessions throughout April and May 2025[3] to provide information on the implementation of the siting and permitting changes, answer questions on straw proposals, and take public comment. EEA presented information on its site suitability straw proposal at a May 5, 2025, stakeholder session in Holyoke.

EEA reviewed all public comments received on the proposal through the end of June 2025. Additionally, EEA held small-group meetings with various interested stakeholders, including representatives of land use and environmental advocacy organizations, environmental justice advocacy organizations, renewable energy developers, and electric utilities.

III. DEFINITIONS

Applicable Facility. A Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility required to complete a site suitability analysis in order to apply for a Consolidated Permit or Consolidated State Permit pursuant to regulations promulgated by the EFSB and/or a Consolidated Local Permit pursuant to regulations promulgated by DOER. Applicable Facilities include Large Clean Energy Generation Facilities, Small Clean Energy Generation Facilities, Large Clean Energy Storage Facilities, and Small Clean Energy Storage Facilities. Applicable Facilities also include Large Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities and Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities that are proposed to be sited in a newly established Public Right of Way. A Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility or Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility located in a Burdened Area that is required to complete a Cumulative Impact Analysis within a Burdened Area, pursuant to 980 CMR 15.00 is not an Applicable Facility. A Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility shall not be considered an Applicable Facility if it: (1) has a Site Footprint of less than one acre; (2) is a Solar Facility with a nameplate capacity, as measured in alternating current, less than or equal to 25 kW; or (3) is a Behind-the-Meter Small Clean Energy Generation Facility with a nameplate capacity less than or equal to 250 kW.

Applicant. A person or entity that submits to the EFSB an application for a Consolidated Permit for a Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility or Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility or an application for a Consolidated State Permit for a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility, pursuant to 980 CMR

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[2] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, *Site Suitability Methodology for Clean Energy Infrastructure: Straw Proposal* (Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, May 2025), accessed July 1, 2025, https://www.mass.gov/doc/site-suitability-methodology-for-clean-energy-infrastructure-straw-proposal/download.

[3] Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, "2024 Climate Act Stakeholder Sessions," *Mass.gov*, April 2025, accessed June 30, 2025, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2024-climate-act-stakeholder-sessions.

13.00. An Applicant also means a person or entity who submits an application for a Consolidated Local Permit to a Local Government pursuant to 225 CMR 29.00.

Behind-the-Meter Small Clean Energy Generation Facility. A Small Clean Energy Generation Facility that serves On-site Load other than parasitic or station load utilized to operate the Small Clean Energy Generation.

Brownfield. A disposal site that has received a release tracking number from MassDEP pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0000: Massachusetts Contingency Plan, the redevelopment or reuse of which is hindered by the presence of oil or hazardous materials, as determined by the DOER, in consultation with the MassDEP. No disposal site that otherwise meets this definition shall be excluded from consideration as a Brownfield because its cleanup is also regulated by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 9601-9675, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C §§ 6921-6939g, or any other federal program.

Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility. A Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility or a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility.

Consolidated Permit. A permit issued by the EFSB to a Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility or a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility that includes all municipal, regional and state permits that the Large or Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility would otherwise need to obtain individually, with the exception of certain federal permits that are delegated to specific state agencies as determined by the EFSB.

Consolidated Local Permit. A permit issued by a Local Government for a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility that includes all required local permits, approvals, or authorizations that the Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility would otherwise need to obtain individually from the Local Government, pursuant to regulations promulgated by DOER to implement G.L. c. 25A § 21 or the EFSB to implement G.L. c. 164 § 69W.

Consolidated State Permit. A permit issued by the EFSB to a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility, that includes all state permits, approvals, or authorizations that the Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility would otherwise need to obtain individually from state agencies, authorities, boards, commissions, offices or other entities, with the exception of certain federal permits that are delegated to specific state agencies as determined by the EFSB.

Core Habitat. Key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other species of conservation concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth, as identified by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in the latest available version of BioMap framework within the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

Criteria-Specific Suitability Score. The score for each criterion in the Site Suitability Assessment, as assessed following the methods outlined in this guidance, representing the suitability of a site for a given Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility with respect to each criterion. These scores can range from 0.0 (most suitable, lowest impact, and/or greatest benefit) to 10.0 (least suitable, greatest impact, and/or lowest benefit).

Critical Natural Landscape. Areas including large natural landscape blocks and buffering uplands around coastal, wetland and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity, as identified by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in the latest available version of the BioMap framework within the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

Cumulative Impact Analysis (CIA). An analysis assessing cumulative impacts and burdens required to be completed by Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities in accordance with 980 CMR 15.00.

Department of Energy Resources (DOER). The Department of Energy Resources established by M.G.L. c. 25A.

Eligible Landfill. A landfill that has received a written determination from the MassDEP that the facility has been closed in accordance with 310 CMR 19.140: *Landfill Closure Requirements*.

Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB). The Energy Facilities Siting Board established pursuant to M.G.L. c. 164, § 69H.

Formal Score Determination. A determination issued by the Site Suitability Score Reviewer which includes an Applicable Facility's final Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores.

Large Clean Energy Generation Facility. Energy generation infrastructure with a nameplate capacity of not less than 25 megawatts that is an anaerobic digestion facility, solar facility or wind facility, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the Large Clean Energy Generation Facility, or, following a rulemaking by the EFSB in consultation with the Department of Energy Resources, that includes the facility within the regulatory definition of a Large Clean Energy Generation Facility, any other type of generation facility that does not emit greenhouse gas; provided, however, that the nameplate capacity for solar facilities shall be calculated in direct current.

Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility. A Large Clean Energy Generation Facility, Large Clean Energy Storage Facility, or Large Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility.

Large Clean Energy Storage Facility. An energy storage system as defined in section 1 of chapter 164 with a rated capacity of not less than 100 megawatt hours, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the Large Clean Energy Storage Facility.

Large Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility. Electric transmission and distribution infrastructure and related ancillary infrastructure that is: (i) a new electric transmission line having a design rating of not less than 69 kilovolts and that is not less than 1 mile in length on a new transmission corridor, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line; (ii) a new electric transmission line having a design rating of not less than 115 kilovolts that is not less than 10 miles in length on an existing transmission corridor except reconductored or rebuilt transmission lines at the same voltage, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line; (iii) any other new electric transmission infrastructure requiring zoning exemptions, including standalone transmission substations and upgrades and any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line; and (iv) facilities needed to interconnect offshore wind to the grid; provided, however, that the large clean transmission and distribution facility is: (A) designed, fully or in part, to directly interconnect or otherwise facilitate the interconnection of clean energy infrastructure to the electric grid; (B) approved by the regional transmission operator in relation to interconnecting clean energy infrastructure; (C) proposed to ensure electric grid reliability and stability; or (D) will help facilitate the electrification of the building and transportation sectors; provided further, that a "Large Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility" shall not include new transmission and distribution infrastructure that solely interconnects new and existing energy generation powered by fossil fuels on or after January 1, 2026.

MassDEP. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection established by M.G.L. c. 23J, § 2.

On-site Load. Any new or existing electric load located at the site of a Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility, including any parasitic load that may result from the installation of the Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility, and that is wired to receive a portion of the electrical energy output from the Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility before the balance of such output passes through the Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility's metered interconnection onto the electric grid.

Previously Developed Land. Land degraded by impervious surfaces from existing structures or pavement, absence of topsoil, junkyards, golf courses, abandoned dumping yards, or other degraded areas as determined by DOER.

Protected Open Space. Land or water areas that have a level of legal protection from change of use or further development and are preserved for various purposes, such as recreation, conservation, or scenic beauty. Protections may be permanent (e.g., permanent deed restrictions, Article 97, Agriculture Preservation Restriction, Conservation Restriction, or other legal document), temporary (e.g., short-term Conservation Restriction or other temporary protection related to existing functional use), or limited (e.g., other legal mechanisms than those listed above or protected through functional use).

Public Right of Way. Any way laid out by public authority that permits public access or that is established on public property and which may or may not already house utility infrastructure.

Request for Score Review. A process through which Applicants of Applicable Facilities may dispute the result of the Site Suitability Score Reviewer's Formal Score Determination. A Request for Score Review of a Consolidated Local Permit application before a Local Government will be considered by DOER. A Request for Score Review of a Consolidated Permit or Consolidated State Permit before the EFSB will be considered by the EFSB.

Route and Site Scoring. An analysis of non-cumulative environmental and social indicators to rank site alternatives in the EFSB permitting process. This analysis is conducted by the EFSB separately from the Site Suitability Assessment, and the results of both analyses will be considered in the EFSB's final decision on an application for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit, as applicable.

Site Footprint. The area of land and water encompassed by an Applicable Facility's equipment, plus any land significantly impacted by construction of the Applicable Facility, including, but not limited to, land altered for clearing, grading, and roadways.

Site Suitability Assessment. An analysis of a site's suitability for the development of an Applicable Facility using the methodology outlined in this guidance.

Site Suitability Score Modifiers. Positive or negative adjustments to a Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility's Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores or Total Site Suitability Score that are reflective of development potential or social and environmental benefits, as delineated in Sections IV.B.i. and vii., respectively.

Site Suitability Score Reviewer. A third-party entity retained by the Commonwealth to perform Formal Score Determinations, which shall entail calculating final Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores and Total Site Suitability Scores for Applicable Facilities.

Small Clean Energy Generation Facility. Energy generation infrastructure with a nameplate capacity of less than 25 megawatts that is an anaerobic digestion facility, solar facility, or wind facility, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the Small Clean Energy Generation Facility

or, following a rulemaking by DOER in consultation with the EFSB in which the facility type is added to the regulatory definition of a Small Clean Energy Generation Facility, any other type of generation facility that produces no greenhouse gas emissions or other pollutant emissions known to have negative health impacts; provided, however, that the nameplate capacity for solar facilities shall be calculated in direct current.

Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility. A Small Clean Energy Generation Facility, Small Clean Energy Storage Facility, or Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility.

Small Clean Energy Storage Facility. An energy storage system as defined in section 1 of chapter 164 with a rated capacity of less than 100 megawatt hours, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the Small Clean Energy Storage Facility.

Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility. Electric transmission and distribution infrastructure and related ancillary infrastructure, including: (i) electric transmission line reconductoring or rebuilding projects; (ii) new or substantially altered electric transmission lines located in an existing transmission corridor that are not more than 10 miles long, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line; (iii) new or substantially altered electric transmission lines located in a new transmission corridor that are not more than 1 mile long, including any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line; (iv) any other electric transmission infrastructure, including standalone transmission substations and upgrades and any ancillary structure that is an integral part of the operation of the transmission line and that does not require zoning exemptions; and (v) electric distribution-level projects that meet a certain threshold, as determined by the department; provided, however, that the "Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility" shall be: (A) designed, fully or in part, to directly interconnect or otherwise facilitate the interconnection of clean energy infrastructure to the electric grid; (B) designed to ensure electric grid reliability and stability; or (C) designed to help facilitate the electrification of the building and transportation sectors; and provided further, that a "Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facility" shall not include new transmission and distribution infrastructure facilities that solely interconnect new or existing generation powered by fossil fuels to the electric grid on or after January 1, 2026.

Solar Canopy. Solar Canopy shall have the same meaning as the definition of Canopy STGU in 225 CMR 28.02: *Definitions*.

Total Site Suitability Score. The sum of all Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores and any Score Modifiers, representing how suitable a site is for an Applicable Facility across all criteria. The maximum Total Site Suitability Score is 25.

Burdened Areas (BAs). As defined in 980 CMR 15.02. BAs will be mapped throughout the state to determine applicability of CIAs in the EFSB permitting process.

IV. SITE SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Site Suitability Assessment uses a scoring framework that evaluates certain social and environmental criteria using publicly available datasets and tools. The following screening criteria are included in the scoring framework: climate change resilience, carbon storage and sequestration, biodiversity, agricultural resources, and social and environmental burdens. The following criteria may modify the score or institute additional requirements: development potential and social and environmental benefits. Site suitability for

Applicable Facilities should be scored for each criterion using methods informed by experts, stakeholders, and public input and outlined in this guidance.

The Site Suitability Assessment will include both a Total Site Suitability Score, which represents how suitable a site is for an Applicable Facility across all criteria, and Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores, which represent the suitability of a site for an Applicable Facility with respect to each criterion. Lower suitability scores indicate more suitable locations for Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities, while higher scores would indicate less suitable locations. Criteria-Specific Site Suitability scores should be calculated according to the instructions below. Each criterion should be added together to calculate the Total Site Suitability Score. Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 5, adding up to a possible Total Site Suitability Score of 25.

Score Modifiers may be applied to adjust Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores or the Total Site Suitability Score, but in no instance shall a Total Site Suitability Score greater than 25 or less than 0. Each Criteria-Specific Suitability Score should be calculated using a specific dataset(s) and formula or tool, as prescribed below. Summary explanations of each criterion and how it should be assessed are included in Section C – Criteria, and scoring calculations for several example sites are included in Appendix A.

A. APPLICABLE FACILITIES

Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities applying for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated State Permit or Consolidates Local Permit are required to complete a site suitability assessment, with certain exceptions.

These exceptions include:

- Large Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities and Small Clean Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities that are not proposed to be sited in a newly established Public Right of Way;
- Large Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities or Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities located in a Burdened Area that are required to complete a Cumulative Impact Analysis within a Burdened Area, pursuant to 980 CMR 15.00; and,
- Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities that:
    - Have a Site Footprint of less than one acre;
    - Are a Solar Facility with a nameplate capacity, as measured in alternating current, less than or equal to 25 kW; or
    - Are a Behind-the-Meter Small Clean Energy Generation Facility with a nameplate capacity less than or equal to 250 kW.

i. SPECIAL INFRASTRUCTURE TYPES

a. ONSHORE LINEAR INFRASTRUCTURE

Applicable Facilities that are linear infrastructure located onshore, such as a transmission cable and related infrastructure, are not required to complete a Site Suitability Assessment as outlined in this document unless they are proposed to be located in a newly established Public Right of Way.

b. OFFSHORE LINEAR INFRASTRUCTURE

Linear infrastructure located offshore, such as a transmission cable and related infrastructure located in state waters and lands, are not required to complete a Site Suitability Assessment as outlined in this document. However, such infrastructure should avoid siting in certain protected areas categorized as special, sensitive, or unique resources or concentrations of water-dependent uses by the latest version of the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan. Geospatial maps of these areas are available through the

Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan Data Viewer.[4] Any routes passing through any of these areas should be considered highly unsuitable unless project plans include appropriate minimization and mitigation measures, and the EFSB should take this into consideration in its review of an Application for a Consolidated Permit. Proponents should consult the Siting and Performance Standards in the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan and 301 CMR 28.00.

EEA plans to update this guidance to provide more specific guidelines on Site Suitability Assessments for offshore linear infrastructure at a later date.

B. SCORING PROCESS

Applicants should estimate the Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores for any sites under consideration for hosting an Applicable Facility as early as possible prior to submitting an application for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit to the EFSB or a Local Government, as applicable, to allow time to make design changes or choose a different site if the Applicable Facility is determined to be likely to receive a high Total Site Suitability Score or one or more high Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores. Applicants should leave sufficient time for the Formal Score Determination process, and a Request for Score Review if necessary, to be completed prior to submitting an application.

ii. FORMAL SCORE DETERMINATION

Applicants should submit a site plan, detailed explanation of the design of an Applicable Facility, and its anticipated Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-Specific Suitability Score to the Site Suitability Score Reviewer no less than 45 days prior to submitting their application for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit. The Site Suitability Score Reviewer shall review the information provided and determine an Applicable Facility's final Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores within 30 days.

iii. CURE PROCESS

If the Site Suitability Score Reviewer has insufficient information to complete its review, it may request information from the Applicant necessary to do so, and the Applicant shall have 30 days to provide this information from the date it is requested. The Site Suitability Score Reviewer shall complete its review of any revised set of information within 30 days of receipt. If the information provided is still insufficient, the Site Suitability Score Reviewer can issue a determination that its review cannot be completed. An Applicant that receives such a determination must wait 30 days before it can resubmit a new request for score determination from the Site Suitability Score Reviewer for the same Applicable Facility.

iv. REQUESTS FOR SCORE REVIEW BY DOER

If an Applicant for a Consolidated Local Permit submitted to a Local Government, the Local Government, or any other party substantially and specifically affected by an Applicable Facility disputes the result of the Site Suitability Score Reviewer's Formal Score Determination conducted under Section IV.A.i. and/or ii., they may submit a Request for Score Review to DOER. Requests for Score Review shall be completed within 30 days of receipt. Pursuant to 225 CMR 29.07(4), any score determination issued by DOER shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal.

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[4] Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, *Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan*, Massachusetts.gov, updated January 3, 2022, accessed July 16, 2025, https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-ocean-management-plan

v. REQUESTS FOR SCORE REVIEW BY EFSB

If an Applicant for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit under review before the EFSB, or any other party to the EFSB proceeding for the Applicable Facility, disputes the result of the Site Suitability Score Reviewer's score determination conducted under Section IV.A.i. and/or ii., they may submit a Request for Score Review to the EFSB Director. Requests for Score Review shall be completed within 30 days of receipt. Pursuant to the applicable EFSB regulations, any score determination issued by the EFSB Director shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal.

C. CRITERIA

i. CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

Climate change resilience will be assessed based on the exposure of sites to climate hazards that can be assessed with readily available tools and data and that are likely to compromise the operations of the facility. This currently includes site exposure to: (1) riverine flooding; and (2) coastal flooding from sea level rise and storm surge. Exposure ratings for these hazards can be obtained using the ResilientMass Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool[5], which is grounded in scientific methodology using available climate data for Massachusetts. The highest exposure rating derived from the tool for either of the two hazards will be used to determine the overall climate change resilience Criteria-Specific Suitability Score pursuant to the table below.

Highest Exposure Rating for riverine flooding and/or coastal flooding hazards	**Suitability Score for Climate Change Resilience**
Not Exposed	0.0
Low Exposure	2.0
Moderate Exposure	3.5
High Exposure	5.0

ii. CARBON STORAGE AND SEQUESTRATION

For carbon storage and sequestration, site suitability will be evaluated based on the estimated level of current ecosystem carbon stocks and projections of future carbon sequestration over 50 years that would be lost within a project's Site Footprint. For land supporting ecosystems with high carbon storage potential, scores will be derived from the National Forest Carbon Monitoring System, while land with lower carbon storage potential will get a suitability score assigned based on land cover. The following data sources will be used:

- *Total Ecosystem Carbon in 2070* data from the National Forest Carbon Monitoring System (NFCMS)
- The most recent year of land cover data from the U.S. Geological Survey's Annual National Land Cover Database (NLCD).

[5] At a later date, EEA plans to release publicly available data layers to assess the climate resilience criteria in place of the Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool.

Specifically, Criteria-Specific Suitability Score for carbon storage and sequestration shall be calculated using the Site Footprint and an ecosystem carbon index, based on the following table and mapped to 30-meter grid cells statewide.[6] Scores are calculated by:

1) Identifying the ecosystem carbon index values of grid cells centered inside the Site Footprint; and
2) Calculating the average of these ecosystem carbon index values.

The ecosystem carbon index is determined for each 30-meter grid cell across the state as follows:

Land Cover (*Annual NLCD*, most recent year/version)	**Total Ecosystem Carbon** (NFCMS *Total Ecosystem Carbon in 2070*)	**Ecosystem Carbon Index** 0.0 = lowest carbon value 5.0 = highest carbon value
Developed (excluding Developed Open Space)	Assumed to be minimal (regardless of NFMCS data)	0.0
Undeveloped (including Developed Open Space)	<200 $MgCO_2e$/acre or "NoData" in NFMCS data	1.0
Undeveloped (including Developed Open Space)	≥200 $MgCO_2e$/acre	1.0 to 5.0, rescaled from NFCMS *Total Ecosystem Carbon in 2070*[7]

The Criteria-Specific Suitability Score for carbon storage and sequestration will therefore reflect a facility's anticipated impact on the average carbon storage potential across the site Site Footprint.

iii. BIODIVERSITY

The biodiversity criteria will assess site suitability in terms of avoiding and minimizing negative impacts on land and waters with high habitat and biodiversity conservation value, identified primarily from BioMap, the Commonwealth's biodiversity conservation mapping initiative. Suitability will be scored based on Site Footprint overlaps with:

- Specific BioMap elements or components (e.g. Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape)
- Priority Habitats designated by the MassWildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHSEP); and
- Index of Ecological Integrity values from the UMass Conservation Assessment Prioritization System (CAPS).

Specifically, Criteria-Specific Suitability Score for biodiversity shall be calculated using the Site Footprint and an integrated biodiversity index mapped on 30-meter grid cells statewide.[8] Scores are calculated by:

1) Identifying the biodiversity index values of grid cells centered inside the Site Footprint; and

[6] Th ecosystem carbon index will be a publicly available geospatial data layer hosted by EEA and/or MassGIS.

[7] Values from the NFCMS *Total Ecosystem Carbon in 2070* data layer will be rescaled to the 1.0 to 5.0 range after removing all areas with developed landcover or < 200 $MgCO_2e$/acre. This rescaled data layer will be provided by EEA and/or MassGIS.

[8] This biodiversity index will be a publicly available geospatial data layer hosted by EEA and/or MassGIS.

2) Calculating the average of the highest 25% of these biodiversity index values.

The biodiversity index is determined for each 30-meter grid cell across the state as follows:

Biodiversity Criteria	**Biodiversity Index** 0.0 = lowest biodiversity value 5.0 = highest biodiversity value
Not in BioMap Core Habitat, Critical Natura Landscapes, Regional Connectivity, or NHESP Priority Habitat	0.0 – 2.0, proportional to CAPS Index of Ecological Integrity[9]
In[10] BioMap Regional Connectivity component and not in Critical Natural Landscapes, Core Habitat or NHSEP Priority Habitat	2.5
In BioMap Critical Natural Landscape and not in Core Habitat or NHSEP Priority Habitat	3.5
In BioMap Core Habitat and not in NHSEP Priority Habitat	4.5
In NHESP Priority Habitat	5.0

The biodiversity score will therefore reflect a facility's anticipated impact on the highest biodiversity value areas (top 25%) within a Site Footprint.

iv. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

The agricultural resources criteria will be assessed in terms of avoiding and minimizing negative impacts on areas with soils that are particularly well-suited for agricultural production, particularly when those areas are active farmland. Suitability will be scored based on Site Footprint overlaps with:

- National Resource Conservation Service's Prime Farmland Soils categories for Massachusetts.
- The most recent year of land cover data from the U.S. Geological Survey's Annual National Land Cover Database (NLCD).

Specifically, Criteria-Specific Suitability Score for agricultural resources shall be calculated using the Site Footprint and an agricultural resources index mapped on 30-meter grid cells statewide.[11] Scores are calculated by:

1) Identifying the agricultural resources index values of grid cells centered inside the Site Footprint; and
2) Calculating the average of the highest 50% of these agricultural resources index values.

The biodiversity index is determined for each 30-meter grid cell across the state as follows:

Anaerobic Digesters designed to process farm-related organic waste, and Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit, as defined in 225 CMR 28.02, shall receive a 0 regardless of underlying soil classification. Such facilities shall be required to self-attest that they meet one or both of these criteria but

[9] This will use the Massachusetts state version of IEI, with values quantile rescaled to the 0.0 to 2.0 range after removing all areas overlapping BioMap and NHESP areas designated above.

[10] *In* here means the grid cell center is inside a polygon in the designated data layer.

[11] This biodiversity index will be a publicly available geospatial data layer hosted by EEA and/or MassGIS.

shall be required as a condition of receiving a Consolidated Permit or Consolidated Local Permit to meet these criteria.

Farmland Soils Category	**Land Cover** (*Annual NLCD*, most recent year/version)	**Agricultural Resources Index** 0.0 = lowest agricultural value 5.0 = highest agricultural value
Any	Developed	0.0
None	Other Undeveloped	0.0
Farmland of Unique Importance	Other Undeveloped	1.0
Farmland of Statewide Importance	Other Undeveloped	2.0
None	Agriculture (Cultivated Crops, Pasture/Hay)	2.5
Prime Farmland Soils	Other Undeveloped	3.0
Farmland of Unique Importance	Agriculture (Cultivated Crops, Pasture/Hay)	3.0
Farmland of Statewide Importance	Agriculture (Cultivated Crops, Pasture/Hay)	4.0
Prime Farmland Soils	Agriculture (Cultivated Crops, Pasture/Hay)	5.0

The agricultural resources score will therefore reflect a facility's anticipated impact on the highest agricultural resource value areas (top 50%) within a Site Footprint.

i. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BURDENS

The social and environmental burdens criteria will be assessed by examining an Applicable Facility's Site Footprint and its intersection with the scores established for each census block group in the MassEnviroScreen tool. This map, which is currently under development by OEJE, MassGIS, and a consultant, will identify the most environmentally vulnerable or burdened communities in Massachusetts based on a cumulative impact score that incorporates exposure to pollution and additional public health and income criteria in MassEnviroScreen.

Each Applicable Facility shall be scored by overlaying the Site Footprint on the MES map to identify all intersecting census block groups. If a Site Footprint spans multiple census block groups, the percent of the Site Footprint within each census block group shall be calculated, and a weighted average percentile shall be determined. Applicable Facilities shall be scored as follows:

MassEnviroScreen Score	**Suitability Score for Social and Environmental Burdens** 0.0 = lowest impact 5.0 = highest impact
Below 10	0.0
10 – 29.9	1.0
30 – 49.9	2.0

50 – 69.9	3.0
70 – 89.9	4.0
90 and above	5.0

D. SCORE MODIFIERS

ii. DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Development potential will be scored based on whether the site meets the requirements of certain types of highly suitable or highly unsuitable categories of land.

Solar Canopies and Applicable Facilities that are located on a Brownfield, Eligible Landfill, or Previously Developed Lands will automatically have five (5) points subtracted from their Total Site Suitability Score, but in no instance shall an Applicable Facility's Total Site Suitability Score be lower than zero. Applicable Facilities should consult with DOER regarding obtaining a pre-determination of likely eligibility as a Solar Canopy or an Applicable Facility proposed to be located on a Brownfield, Eligible Landfill, or Previously Developed Lands. Additionally, distributed generation projects located in an area approved for electric grid upgrades by the DPU under the Capital Investment Project (CIP) Provisional Program[12] will automatically have one (1) point subtracted from their Total Site Suitability Score. Applicable Facilities that meet one or more of these criteria should be required to submit documentation to the Site Suitability Score Reviewer to support their claims.

Applicable Facilities with a Site Footprint that overlaps with Protected Open Space shall automatically receive a Total Site Suitability Score of 20, regardless of Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores. The "Openspace Article 97" and "Openspace by Level of Protection" GIS layers on MassMapper can be used to determine overlap with Protected Open Space.[13] Applicants are encouraged to confirm the site's protected status with the local assessor and/or Registry of Deeds. Solar Canopies sited over parking lots located in Protected Open Space may seek a waiver from DOER that will allow their score to be calculated as if they were not located on Protected Open Space.

Large and Small Clean Energy Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities crossing through Protected Open Space may apply for a waiver if they can demonstrate no other suitable route or location exists. Large and Small Clean Energy Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities should apply to the EFSB Director for a waiver before submitting an Application for a Consolidated Permit to the EFSB, and Small Clean Energy Transmission and Distribution Infrastructure Facilities should apply to the Director of DOER's Siting and Permitting Division for a waiver prior to submitting an Application for a Consolidated Local Permit to a Local Government.

[12] Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, *Provisional System Planning Program Guide*, accessed July 17, 2025, https://www.mass.gov/guides/provisional-system-planning-program-guide.
[13] Projects should consider areas labeled as protected "in perpetuity," "limited," or "term-limited" as meeting the definition of Protected Open Space. If the site does not in fact overlap with Protected Open Space, or the deed allows for the proposed use, the Applicant should submit a Request for Score Review.

iii. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

A social and environmental benefits score may be calculated to reflect any social and environmental benefits provided by the project. Projects can have one (1) point subtracted from their Total Site Suitability Score, up to a total of five (5) points, for demonstrating each of the following benefits:

- Improves local habitat;
- Improves outdoor air quality by displacing emitting source;
- Creates expanded recreational opportunities;
- Funds publicly available EV charging stations;
- Applies community solar bill credits to electric utility customer accounts or otherwise lowers energy costs in the host municipality;
- Establishes cultural easements, in partnership with tribal and indigenous communities;
- Creates or maintains local jobs;
- Has pollinator-friendly design;[14] or
- Other benefits which improve quality of life, as prioritized by the host community.

Applicable Facilities that wish to apply for a social and environment benefit criteria score subtractor must coordinate with the host municipality. If the host municipality and Applicable Facility agree upon one or more benefits, they may sign an agreement, which shall result in a modification of the Applicable Facility's Total Site Suitability Score and result in binding conditions included as part of any permit issued to the facility.

Example: An Applicable Facility approaches a municipality with a desire to lower its Total Site Suitability Score by four or more points to secure more favorable treatment by the municipality in the review of its application for a Consolidated Local Permit. It proposes to create expanded recreational opportunities and apply community solar bill credits to municipal electric accounts and low-income customer accounts within the municipality. The municipality and Applicable Facility engage in negotiations and reach an agreement. The signed agreement serves as evidence that these two social and environmental benefits criteria have been met and the Applicable Facility has its Total Site Suitability Score reduced by four points.

E. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF NOTE

i. DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

The MassDEP Drinking Water Regulations, 310 CMR 22.00, regulate public water supplies and Water Supply Protection Areas. For groundwater supplies, these protection areas are defined as Zones I, II and III, with Zone I being the area immediately surrounding the source. For surface water supplies, protection areas are defined as Zones A, B and C, with Zone A being the area closest to the surface water source and tributaries.

A municipal public water system is required to adopt local controls, enforceable by the municipality, to protect these areas. Local controls must be in the form of zoning or general bylaws or ordinances, or health regulations that meet the requirements of the 310 CMR 22.00.

[14] This social and environmental benefit can be obtained by an Applicable Facility securing a silver certification or higher from the University of Massachusetts Clean Energy Extension Pollinator Friendly Certification Program.

MassDEP's Drinking Water Program has developed solar installation guidance: MassDEP Bureau of Water Resources Drinking Water Program's Guideline #2011-1.[15] The guideline includes criteria for battery storage. Battery storage projects are prohibited in Zone I areas. Outside of Zone I, on land owned or controlled by the public water system for drinking water purposes, the public water system must comply with any relevant local controls and must also obtain MassDEP's approval to change the use of such land, including installing a clean energy project. In order to obtain MassDEP approval, Applicants should consult with the Drinking Water Program and meet the conditions specified in the MassDEP Guideline 2011-1.

Applicable Facilities should also avoid siting in a manner that would require construction or tree clearing activities; activities involving moving, processing, or compacting soil and/or other materials; or construction vehicle traffic within 100 feet of groundwater monitoring wells.[16]

ii. WETLANDS

Wetland areas in Massachusetts are protected under the Wetlands Protections Act (M.G.L. c. 131, § 40) and 310 CMR 10.00. If a project or portion of a project is located within a jurisdictional area, the project's compliance with 310 CMR 10.00 will be reviewed by the municipal conservation commission as part of its application for a Consolidated Local Permit. Projects that result in a discharge of dredged or fill material to waters of the United States and require a Section 401 Water Quality Certification are subject to the regulations at 314 CMR 9.00. Local jurisdictions may also have wetlands protection bylaws.[17]

iii. NOISE

Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities must comply with any local noise bylaws, regulations or ordinances, as well as MassDEP's noise regulations at 310 CMR 7.10. MassDEP issued a Noise Policy[18] that states that a source of sound is considered to be violating 310 CMR 7.10 if the source either increases the broadband sound level by more than 10 decibels above ambient or produces a "pure tone" condition – when any octave band center frequency sound pressure level exceeds the two adjacent center frequency sound pressure levels by 3 decibels or more. These criteria are measured both at the property line and at the nearest inhabited residences or other sensitive receptors. Sound suppression or mitigation measures may be implemented to achieve desired sound levels.[19]

iv. AIR QUALITY AND EMISSIONS

Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities are not likely to emit air pollutants at levels requiring an air permit from MassDEP, with the exception of anaerobic digestion facilities, which would require a comprehensive plan approval pursuant to MassDEP's air pollution regulations at 310 CMR 7.02.

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[15] Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). *PWSs and Wind/Solar Energy Projects Guidance*. Bureau of Resource Protection, Drinking Water Program. Published ca. 2012. PDF. Accessed July 15, 2025. https://www.mass.gov/doc/pwss-and-windsolar-energy-projects-guidance/download.

[16] U.S. Geological Survey. "Groundwater Levels in New England." Interactive web application. New England Water Science Center. Published August 31, 2022. Accessed July 15, 2025. https://newengland.water.usgs.gov/web_app/GWW/GWW.html.

[17] Note that the EFSB has the authority to waive local bylaw requirements through the issuance of a Consolidated Permit.

[18] See https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdep-noise-policy/download.

[19] Note that EFSB has the authority to waive noise requirements through the issuance of a Consolidated Permit.

F. CRITERIA AND SCORING TABLE

The following table provides an overview of the four primary Criteria-Specific Suitability Score categories that will be evaluated to determine an Applicable Facility's Total Site Suitability Score:

Site Suitability Criteria	Scoring Method	Data Source	Points 0 (most suitable) 5 (least suitable)
Climate resilience	Highest exposure ratings for (1) riverine flooding and (2) coastal flooding hazards	ResilientMass *Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool*	Up to 5
Carbon storage	Total ecosystem carbon storage, plus 50-year sequestration potential.	*National Forest Carbon* Monitoring System	Up to 5
Biodiversity	Overlap with specific Biomap elements and NHESP priority habitats, as well as ecological integrity value	MassWildlife BioMap: Core Habitat, Critical Natural Landscapes, and other components	Up to 5
		UMass Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System, Index of Ecological Integrity	
Agricultural Resources	Overlap with areas designated as: (i) Prime Farmland; (ii) Farmland of Statewide Importance; and (iii) areas designated as Farmland of Unique Importance.	*MassGIS NRCS SSURGO-certified soils data for Massachusetts: Prime Farmland Soils*	Up to 5
Social and Environmental Burdens	Overlap with Mass Enviro Screen Score.	MassEnviroScreen	Up to 5
Total Possible Score			**25**

G. SCORE MODIFIER TABLE

The following table provides an overview of the three categories of Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores that can modify an Applicable Facility's score or require additional supporting materials to be submitted with an Applicable Facility's application for a permit.

Site Suitability Criteria	Data Source	Scoring Method
Development potential	Pre-determination letters obtained from DOER (for Solar Canopies, Brownfields, Eligible Landfills,	Automatic Total Site Suitability Score of 25: Located in Protected Open Space 1-point subtraction: Located in a CIP investment area

	and Previously Developed Lands only)	0-points for all Criteria-Specific Site Suitability scores (except Climate Change Resilience): Solar Canopies or Applicable Facilities located on a Brownfield, Eligible Landfill, or Previously Developed Lands
Social and environmental benefits	Signed agreements between host municipality and Applicable Facility	Projects can subtract one (1) point to their score for each of the following project components, up to a total of five (5) points, if agreed to by the host municipality: • Improves local habitat; • Improves outdoor air quality by displacing emitting source; • Creates expanded recreational opportunities; • Funds publicly available EV charging stations; • Applies community solar bill credits to electric utility customer accounts or otherwise lowers energy costs in the host municipality; • Establishes cultural easements, in partnership with tribal and indigenous communities; • Creates or maintains local jobs; • Has pollinator-friendly design;[20] or • Other benefits which improve quality of life, as prioritized by the host community.

V. USE OF METHODOLOGY FOR CONSOLIDATED STATE AND LOCAL PERMITTING AT THE ENERGY FACILITIES SITING BOARD

A. PRE-FILING

Applicable Facilities seeking EFSB Consolidated State and Local Permits will be expected to use the Site Suitability scoring during the pre-filing process as an initial screening tool. Applicants should estimate the Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-specific Suitability Scores for the proposed facility prior to seeking a Formal Score Determination. Applicants should share these estimated scores with stakeholders in any pre-filing engagements that occur prior to the receipt of a Formal Score Determination and describe during stakeholder outreach how the site suitability scores informed the alternatives analysis used to select the preferred site option, if applicable.

B. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants should include the following information for each Applicable Facility, including alternative sites, in their applications to relevant permitting authorities:

- Site suitability report, including Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores;
- Documentation to support scoring analysis results;
- Explanation of why this site was chosen;
- Proposed mitigation measures for any impacts identified in Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores;

[20] This social and environmental benefit can be obtained by an Applicable Facility securing a silver certification or higher from the University of Massachusetts Clean Energy Extension Pollinator Friendly Certification Program.

- Analysis of social and environmental burdens, if applicable; and
- Documentation of social and environmental benefits, if applicable.

Applicable Facilities seeking a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit from the EFSB shall comply with all application requirements of the EFSB.

C. PERMITTING ADJUDICATION

i. APPLICABLE FACILITIES

Applicable Facilities that submit an Application to the EFSB for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit should be required to complete the Site Suitability Assessment. Applicants with otherwise Applicable Facilities located in BAs that apply to the EFSB for a Consolidated Permit, Consolidated Local Permit, or Consolidated State Permit shall not be required to complete the Site Suitability Assessment if a CIA is completed.

ii. USE OF SITE SUITABILITY CRITERIA

The EFSB should incorporate the site suitability criteria in its CIA and Route and Site Scoring analyses as feasible, particularly for projects that are required to complete a CIA and therefore not required to complete a Site Suitability Assessment.

iii. USE OF TOTAL SITE SUITABILITY SCORE

For any Applicable Facilities, the EFSB is recommended to consider the Total Site Suitability Score in its decisions alongside other aspects of the project. The Total Site Suitability Score should be considered in the context of the project's design plan and planned mitigation measures.

iv. USE OF CRITERIA-SPECIFIC SUITABILITY SCORES

The EFSB should use the criteria-specific suitability scores as a resource to determine if minimization or environmental mitigation measures should be required for a project to receive a consolidated permit. Minimization could include minimization of impacts on the project site (e.g., implementing erosion control measures). Mitigation requirements could include mitigation of impacts within the community (e.g., planting trees in the community to replace any trees removed during construction or another location in the community if onsite is not possible), or making a mitigation payment to the host community/communities through a local community fund or an approved state trust fund or non-governmental organization to support conservation efforts, preferably with a nexus to the impact or burden.[21] Additionally, the EFSB should evaluate the scores and associated documentation provided to determine if additional information or evidence should be provided by the Applicant of the Applicable Facility.

v. DE NOVO ADJUDICATION

When conducting a de novo adjudication, the EFSB should review the permitting process for adherence to the standards set forth by DOER in its regulations governing the issuance of Consolidated Local Permits for Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities. Site suitability scores should remain as originally calculated when presented to the Local Government. In the case of a project change or a change in site conditions, a new Site Suitability Assessment may be required.

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[21] State-managed trust fund examples include the Department of Fish & Game Biodiversity Trust or the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET).

VI. USE OF METHODOLOGY FOR CONSOLIDATED LOCAL PERMITTING

A. PRE-FILING

Applicants should estimate the Total Site Suitability Score and Criteria-specific Suitability Scores for the proposed Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility prior to seeking a Formal Score Determination. Applicants should share these estimated scores with stakeholders in any pre-filing engagements that occur prior to the receipt of a Formal Score Determination. Final scores as determined by the Site Suitability Score Reviewer pursuant to Section IV.A.i. and ii. must be calculated prior to submitting an application to a Local Government and be presented as part of the application along with any supporting documentation.

B. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All Applicants seeking a Consolidated Local Permit should provide a Site Suitability Report to the Local Government as part of their application, which should include the following information pertaining to the facility:

- The Total Site Suitability Score;
- All Criteria-specific Suitability Scores;
- An explanation of why the site for the proposed Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility was chosen;
- Proposed minimization and mitigation measures for any impacts identified in Criteria-specific Suitability Scores, pursuant to 225 CMR 29.06(5) through (7);
- Documentation to support the applicability of any Site Suitability Score Modifiers;
- Documentation of social and environmental benefits, if applicable; and
- Analysis of social and environmental burdens, if applicable.

Applicable Facilities seeking a Consolidated Local Permit from a Local Government shall comply with all application requirements established by DOER in 225 CMR 29.00.

C. PERMITTING PROCESS

i. USE OF TOTAL SITE SUITABILITY SCORE

Municipalities are recommended to consider a project's Total Site Suitability Score when determining permit conditions. Sites with a Total Site Suitability Score of 5 or below should be assumed to be highly suitable and require minimal to no mitigation. Significant deference should be given to municipalities seeking mitigation measures for high Criteria-Specific Suitability Scores (see table in Section VIII.C.ii. below) if the project's Total Site Suitability Score is above 15.

i. USE OF CRITERIA-SPECIFIC SUITABILITY SCORES

Municipalities should use the criteria-specific suitability scores as a resource to determine if minimization or environmental mitigation measures should be required for a project to receive a Consolidated Local Permit. Minimization could include minimization of impacts on the project site (e.g., implementing erosion control measures). Mitigation requirements could include mitigation of impacts within the community (e.g., planting trees in the community to replace any trees removed during construction or another location in the community if onsite is not possible), or making a mitigation payment to the host community/communities through a local community fund or an approved state trust fund or non-

governmental organization to support conservation efforts, preferably with a nexus to the impact or burden.[22]

The level and type of mitigation measures required should be informed by the Criteria-Specific Site Suitability score and specific impacted resource. When possible, requirements should be relevant to the category in which the score was assessed. For example, a project receiving a high score in the biodiversity category may be required to complete a habitat restoration project. Where necessary, mitigation can be required to address other social or environmental burdens. The recommended permit requirements and corresponding score ranges are listed below:

Criteria Score Range	Suitability (for specific criteria)	Interpretation (for specific criteria)
Less than or equal to 1.0	Highly suitable, minimal impact	No minimization or mitigation measures required
1.1 to 2.0	Suitable, low impact	Modest minimization and/or mitigation measures may be required
2.1 to 3.0	Moderately suitable, moderate impacts	Minimization and/or mitigation measures likely required
3.1 to 4.0	Not very suitable, moderate to high impact	Significant minimization and/or mitigation measures likely required
Greater than 4.0	Unsuitable, high impact	If permitted, will generally require extensive minimization and/or mitigation

VII. FUTURE UPDATES TO METHODOLOGY AND GUIDANCE

In accordance with G.L. c. 21A § 30, EEA may periodically review and update this guidance, including updating criteria, data sources, scoring protocols and recommendations for use of the scores to ensure they continue to reflect policy goals, best available data and practices and stakeholder feedback.

Any future updates to the guidance will be developed in accordance with the process for the initial development of the guidance. The process will include a stakeholder engagement process, the release of draft guidance and opportunity for public comment on the draft, and a public hearing. The public comment period on the draft shall remain open for at least three weeks, unless EEA determines a shorter time period is necessary.

[22] State-managed trust fund examples include the Department of Fish & Game Biodiversity Trust or the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET).