

SMART Public Comment

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To: SMART, DOER (ENE) <doer.smart@mass.gov>

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Honorable Commissioner:

A subject has come to our attention that is rather mystifying and seems with the knowledge we have been able to collect, unreasonable.

I refer to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources disqualifying priority habitat from the SMART program. Along with other residents and taxpayers in Massachusetts we would like to express our opposition to this plan. We believe this change will hurt our towns, our renewable energy opportunities, and our conservation goals. As a landowner and resident of Southeastern Massachusetts my husband and I are asking for your help.

The town of Rochester passed comprehensive laws regulating solar energy development, specifically designed to minimize impact on scenic, natural and historic resources, while supporting renewable energy and providing the town vital revenue. We believe the use of solar farms will lessen the impact on the environment as opposed to multi-lot subdivisions. Prohibiting our landowners from using their properties for solar farms, in today's environment does not make sense. With the use of solar you end up with renewable energy, town and landowner revenue, and a meadow environment, not more housing in need of increased town infrastructure, schools and energy usage.

For the town of Rochester there is one project with planning and almost all permitting satisfied, this disqualification (if the DOER rule change is allowed to stand) will cause the loss of 250 jobs, an estimated \$4 million in vital town revenue, and conserved acreage about three times the amount required for the project footprint. Taking away this project's qualifications for the SMART program will hurt the town and its residents. Saving lands from residential and other high impact development, would have a solar footprint of approximately 110 acres, while an additional 340 acres would remain untouched, preserving the environment and conserving the meadow landscape we all enjoy. Not to mention, wildlife passage and protecting scenic views.

In our opinion many small landowners, will be forced to consider other options, probably less environmentally healthy. Not only taking away revenue from our communities it will also remove the annual 20 MW of solar renewable energy from the state's generation ability. Towns trying to manage development in an environmentally progressive way may be forced to deal with less attractive alternatives for revenue. Please help us to change this disqualification.

Thank you for your time and consideration during these turbulent times.

Sincerely yours,
Dorothy and John Hanson

6/1/2020

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