

Smart public comment

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

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One town or family's story may seem small as you evaluate this situation but I feel that the Rounseville family's story is the same as many other rural landowners, farmers and cranberry bog owners. My family has owned land in Rochester since the mid 1800's and we have been paying taxes on this land since then. I remember at a young age sitting with my Dad as he went thru all the tax bills and I remember the stress it caused when the money wasn't always readily available to pay those taxes. Many times land had to be sold to pay taxes. I also learned how much he loved this land and had no desire to see it developed. Fifty years later I find the situation is the same. Taxes still need to be paid and our family is under more and more pressure to develop our properties. The ability to put our land to use for solar generation solved this problem. The solar project we have been working on for 2 years would remove 6-8 parcels of property from my families radar for sale or development. This project would have a solar footprint of 110 acres and leave the other 340 acres untouched. Our land would deliver 20 MW of renewable energy for the next 20+ years, retain meadows for endangered species, and provide town revenue of \$4 million over the term of the project. There is already a process in place to protect primary habitat and we are working with mass wildlife natural heritage to do this. My dad would have called this a win-win situation.

We have turned down solar projects in the past (before our towns by-law changed) that would have seen development of solar on some of our most scenic roads. We rejected these projects. We have always tried to keep the best interests of the town in mind when making decisions regarding our land. To date my family has placed 540 acres of Rochester land into conservation with 285 acres of this being primary habitat, as well as conserving land and water resources in Mattapoisett.

The Massachusetts Department of energy resources is preventing my family and other land owners from conserving our property. Tree loss is not permanent. Trees are a renewable resource. Many of these parcels are surrounded by stone walls because they were once farmlands. Solar panels are not permanent. Houses and roads are permanent. I ask that you re-consider this rule change in light of the unintended consequences it creates.

Lisa Rounseville Holden

Rochester

Oral comment given 5/22/20