

SMART Public Comment

Johanna Stacy <johannastacy@gmail.com>

Thu 5/28/2020 2:26 PM

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

Cc: lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gove <lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gove>; jo.comerford@masenate.gov <jo.comerford@masenate.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from a sender outside of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mail system. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear MA DOER,

I am encouraged by recent proposed changes to the SMART Program, but I also feel that there are additional changes that could be made.

As a natural resource professional, it pains me to see forests (sometimes forested wetlands) and productive farmland cleared in order to build small and large-scale solar arrays. Renewable energy is an important way for our society to reduce emissions and slow climate change, but destroying natural landscapes (which have the capacity to both sequester and store carbon for decades to come) in order to build solar arrays that might operate for 20-30 years is counter-intuitive.

I applaud your effort to reduce these negative effects of solar arrays by considering the presence of BioMap2 Core and Priority Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape habitat when siting a new project. These habitat designations cover significant portions of western Massachusetts; however, there is less land in eastern MA with these designations. In addition, forests closer to urban areas (which help to cool residential neighborhoods and provide habitat patches for suburban wildlife) are less likely to carry these designations and thus remain susceptible to clearing for solar. Natural systems face significant challenges already from the effects of climate change and habitat fragmentation; renewable energy projects should not add to the detriment of these systems.

Some loss of trees is expected with any energy development project, but the opportunity exists within the SMART Program structure to strengthen the protection of these natural systems and to incentivize solar projects on rooftops, over parking area, and on other less sensitive land (e.g., landfills, highway cloverleafs, etc).

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,
Johanna Stacy
Northampton, MA