

SMART Public Comment - I support solar siting that works for both people and nature

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

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Department of Energy Resources

I am glad to see proposed updates to the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program will increase statewide solar capacity and improve access for low-income projects. Responding as a global community to the threat of climate change means increasing and improving access to renewable energy sources.

Thank you for steering new projects away from irreplaceable natural lands by ending eligibility for new, large-scale, private solar projects in the most ecologically sensitive areas, like habitat for state-listed rare species, and Critical Natural Landscapes.

However, I urge you to go further by:

- * Increasing funding for projects within existing developed lands, like rooftop arrays and parking lot canopies, which have far fewer development impacts than arrays on open land.
- * Performing an analysis of "preferred lands" that can help Massachusetts meet solar goals while limiting new development
- * Providing more planning assistance to small communities to help direct projects to the right locations.

It's important to make sure expanded solar access doesn't come at the expense of our forests and other natural resources.

As a PCV volunteer since it's inception, thru first NWFS now Native

Plant Trust, I truly know how fragile the core habitats are. I have searched for rare plants shown in herbaria samples or old maps only to find a golf course maintenance area or or a wetland altered and now standing water instead of bog or fresh meadow. I have recently moved from Rochester where I was on the Conservation Commission. It broke my heart to see the clear cuts that were being done for the way too many solar fields that Rochester has had to approve. If you look at Bio Map II, a great deal of SE MA is core habitat or some other designation that the state has set to protect our rarest plants and animals. Please Write these regs with an eye towards saving what are now somewhat protected places and using instead parking lots, rooftops and true waste spaces like highway medians and brown fields.

Thank you for considering these comments, and for improving the solar landscape in Massachusetts in a way that benefits consumers, the climate, and conservation.

Sincerely,

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