



Solar Siting Task Force

January 5, 2016

Diane Bothfeld

Deputy Secretary for Dairy Policy

Agency of Agriculture

- Agriculture is booming in Vermont
 - Cheese makers increasing in number and winning national as well as international awards
- #1 Producer of maple in the US – record growth
- #1 Locavore state in country
- #1 Ice Cider in US



Agency of Agriculture

- Agriculture is booming in Vermont
 - #1 in direct marketing
 - Farmers markets, Farm Stands, CSAs
 - #1 Farm to School
 - USDA recognize as model
 - #1 Human Handling for Slaughter, 100% Slaughter Facilities have humane handling plans
 - #1 hospital - 1/2 local sourced food for health System – FAHC
 - #1 eating vegetables and exercising



Agricultural Soils

- Renewable Energy
 - Important to the state to reach energy goals
 - Renewable energy on the farm
 - Both to power the farm and sell to the grid
 - Wind for electricity
 - Methane digestion of manure for electricity
 - Solar for electricity and hot water



shutterstock · 150538622

Agricultural Soils

- Solar on agricultural soils
 - On-farm for farm electricity – small few panels
 - On-farm for power to the grid
 - To date ~ 2 to 8 acres
 - Providing land for solar for power to the grid can provide stable source of income for farm from rent
 - Agricultural Land attractive
 - the land is open with no trees,
 - the soils are well drained, and agricultural soils can be flat and usually have some form of access from roads to access the crop land.
 - These same attributes are attractive to buildings and other development.

Agricultural Soils

- Why is farmland (primary agricultural soils) important
 - Limited amount of ranked (best) soils
 - Supports the state's rural economy (food production and manufacturing)
 - Integral to farm operations for waste management, crop production and maintenance of water quality, especially in light of new rules that will require small farms to meet certain water quality standards

Agricultural Soils

- RPC report and mapping
 - Determined that there is land available that is not primary agricultural soils
- To meet statewide solar goals ~13,000 acres needed
 - Primary agricultural soils could be avoided and still reach solar goals.
 - Some installations may still impact primary agricultural soils – limit the impact

Agricultural Soils

- Recommendations for siting
 - Agency of Agriculture be provided:
 - Statutory right to intervene in applications for solar energy installations – ground mounted - *intervention as of right*, in the section 248 process
 - Be provided “bill back” authority for its involvement in all applications with primary agricultural soil impact.

Agricultural Soils

- Within Section 248 proceedings:
 - Ground mounted solar only.
 - Avoid all USDA primary ag ranked soils (agricultural value groups 1 through 8 and soils that are an active part of a farming operation) especially soils ranked 1 through 4.
 - If unable to avoid primary ag soils:
 - Land should not be altered through scraping or grading.
 - Install with no concrete – drill or pound in posts
 - Infrastructure to edges of site – roads and transformers
 - Indirect impacts and access to USDA ranked soils should be determined and avoided as part of the siting process. No islands of soils

Agricultural Soils

- Within Section 248 proceedings
 - Impact to the farm owner's nutrient management plan - will the loss of the acreage impact the nutrient management plan on that farm for water quality
 - Consider dual use – livestock grazing or of a height to allow cropping
 - At the end of the useful life of the installation all infrastructure should be removed, without reducing the agricultural potential of the ranked soil.

Agricultural Soils

- Renewable energy is important to the state and for our future!
- Agriculture can play a part.
- Solar goals can be met with available land
- Avoid best agricultural soils
- If cannot avoid – limit impact
- Questions