

- ANR supports PUC Rule 5.100 as proposed.
- The current version is a culmination of years of stakeholder engagement and many rounds of workshops, comments, and iterations of the Rule.
- The Rule is a reasonable compromise where no one party got everything they asked for.
  
- Forests are Vermont’s most important tool to address climate change – for both resilience and mitigation.
- The Vermont Climate Council found VT’s forests store an average of 1,859 million metric tons<sup>1</sup> of carbon, and that once the state is successful in achieving all the carbon reduction targets set forth the GWSA, we will still need to maintain the majority of our current forest cover to achieve net zero by 2050.
  
- In addition to being a critical tool in the fight against climate change, forests provide a wide range of values to Vermonters from clean air and clean water to flood storage, wildlife habitat, forest products, and they serve as the backbone of Vermont’s world-class outdoor recreation economy.
- Maintaining Vermont’s forests should be a priority as we shape programs to achieve the state’s renewable energy goals.
- This is not an either-or conversation. We can do both.
  
- Consistent with that theme, Rule 5.100 modifies the definition of ‘Preferred Site’ to exclude projects that require significant forest clearing.
- **‘Significant Forest Clearing’** is defined as clearing more than three acres of forest.
- The state has long capped the size of net metered projects at 500kw in nameplate capacity.
- A 500kw solar project has a roughly 3-acre footprint.
- So this Rule allows for the largest possible net metered solar project to clear forest on 100% of its footprint, and still receive the ‘Preferred Site’ incentive.
- This also means a 150kw net metered project could clear more than twice its footprint and still not run afoul of this provision.
- That does not seem to be an overly burdensome restriction.
  
- It’s also important to highlight that the ‘Significant Forest Clearing’ provision only applies to net metered projects seeking the ‘Preferred Site’ incentive.
- It does not affect net metered projects that do not seek the preferred site incentive, and it has no bearing whatsoever on utility scale renewable energy projects.
- Net metered projects that qualify as ‘Preferred Sites’ receive an increase rate for their electricity.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.uvm.edu/femc/attachments/project/1706/Carbon\\_Budget\\_for\\_Vermont\\_Sept\\_2021.pdf](https://www.uvm.edu/femc/attachments/project/1706/Carbon_Budget_for_Vermont_Sept_2021.pdf)

- The 'Preferred Site' concept was envisioned as an incentive to encourage the siting of projects at locations with low natural resource values, such as already disturbed sites like brownfields, gravel pits, landfills and parking lots.
  - The whole purpose of the 'Preferred Site' incentive is to move projects away from forests.
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- I'll wind my comments down now by briefly sharing some relevant historic data.
  - ANR has informally tracked forest clearing associated with energy projects since about 2016.
  - The spreadsheet currently includes roughly 530 solar projects.
  - 213 of those projects involve some forest clearing.
  - Of those 213 projects with forest clearing, only 39 are net metered projects that involved more than 3 acres of forest clearing.
  - 10 of those 39 slightly exceed the 3-acre threshold and likely could have been designed to meet it.
  - This leaves fewer than 30 projects out of the over 500 the Agency has tracked that would be affected by this Rule.
  - And that number – importantly – does not include the thousands of residential scale and roof top projects the Agency does not track.
  - From our perspective, the goal and effect of this provision is not to discourage net metering in Vermont, but rather to eliminate a siting incentive for the small subset of projects that have outside impacts on Vermont's forests.
  - Given that, the Agency supports Rule 5.100 as proposed.
  - Thank you.

Net Meterd Solar with >3-acre of forest clearing				ANR - 12/14/23	
#	Acres Cleared	Array_Size_kW	ProjectName	TownName	Permit Number
1	11.78755679	384	Whitney Blake Solar Phase II	Westminster	NM-5165
2	9.20912067	500	Springfield Hospital Solar aka Mountain Funds II, LLC	Springfield	18-2611-NMP
3	9.15848099	500	Craigie Hill Solar, LLC	Springfield	
4	9.0277683	500	Cavendish Community Solar LLC	Cavendish	20-1775-NM
5	8.302337863	500	Juniper Hill Solar Project	Windsor	18-1730-NMP
6	8.103101388	499	Maple Leaf Solar	Bennington	16-0002-NMP
7	7.782567627	500	Randolph Davis Solar, LLC	Randolph	21-2939-NMP
8	7.416833413	500	Norwich Upper Loveland Solar LLC	Norwich	21-3587-NMP
9	7.274868203	500	Hartland Eastman Solar, LLC	Hartland	20-1913-NMP
10	7.233039065	500	Newbury Community Solar	Newbury	20-0926-NMP
11	6.77178404	500	Springfield Edgewood Solar	Springfield	18-2504-NMP
12	6.428914635	500	CCB Corporation	Brattleboro	21-2471-NMP
13	6.33039226	500	Newbury Welch Solar, LLC	Newbury	20-1036-NMP
14	6.328726513	500	Westminster Back W Solar LLC	Westminster	21-0236-NMP
15	6.297833006	500	Danville Pumpkin Hill Solar LLC	Danville	23-1743-NMP
16	6.252078505	500	Royalton Post Farm Solar LLC	Royalton	21-3303-NMP
17	5.552372686	500	Novus Montpelier Solar	Montpelier	16-0021-NMP
18	5.282690474	375	TES Solar, LLC (Thetford School District)	Thetford	22-1136-NMP
19	5.060143549	500	Gore Road Solar	Bennington	
20	5.016464124	500	Portland Street Solar LLC	Saint Johnsbury	19-2484-NMP
21	4.782426161	500	T&T Solar	Shaftsbury	19-2711-NMP
22	4.262885538	500	Shields Drive Solar	Bennington	18-1975-NMP
23	4.144644353	500	Quarry Road Solar Project	Sudbury	18-2598-NMP
24	4.085214992	500	GLC Vorsteveld	Panton	16-0009-NMP
25	3.979389573	500	Jamaica 30 Solar LLC	Jamaica	22-3533-NMP
26	3.927452424	500	Weathersfield Transfer Station Solar LLC	Weathersfield	19-2539-NMP
27	3.843498028	500	Weathersfield Town Garage Solar LLC	Weathersfield	19-2616-NMP
28	3.638733444	500	Weed Fish Hatchery Solar	Grand Isle	17-4995-NMP
29	3.599992112	500	ER Wolcott Landfill Solar	Wolcott	
30	3.473466959	500	Springfield 694 Spencer Hollow Solar LLC	Springfield	21-0186-NMP
31	3.385585993	500	SolarSense VT XXVII	Concord	19-2132-NMP
32	3.378429514	500	Eddy Road Solar	Chester	18-1136-NMP
33	3.331830367	500	Beckley Hill Solar	Barre	18-2341-NMP
34	3.308099	500	Weathersfield Solar Projects	Weathersfield	18-2049-NMP
35	3.257165818	500	DRC Solar LLC, Casella Construction, Inc.	Pittsford	21-0592-NMP
36	3.203064152	500	Hartland Route 4 Solar	Hartland	18-3966-PET; 18-0611-NMP
37	3.11381349	500	GLC Ski Bowl Road Solar	Rockingham	16-0053-NMP
38	3.03506535	500	Memorial Quarry Solar	St. Johnsbury	17-4469-NMP
39	3.006619564	500	SolarSense VT XXIII, LLC	Wilmington	18-1699-NMP