

2017 Hudson River Symposium: Changing Energy Landscapes in the Hudson Valley and Watershed

Solar Energy and Farmland: Issues and Impacts



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Our Mission:

Scenic Hudson is dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River, its riverfront and the majestic vistas and working landscapes beyond as an irreplaceable national treasure for America and a vital resource for residents and visitors.



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What we do:

- Land
- Parks
- Advocacy



Why should we care about renewable energy development in the Hudson Valley?

- The Hudson Valley is already being impacted by climate change
- State policy (REV, CES, CEF) is driving renewable energy project development
- Organizational mission: incorporate climate change mitigation as well as adaptation

Issues raised by accelerated renewable energy development in the Hudson Valley

There is likely to be a rush to gain approval for renewable energy projects in the Hudson Valley, especially solar installations, driven by both state policy and financial incentives, but not necessarily based in sound planning or environmental principles.

- Development pressure on farm land, open space and other important lands
- Environmental and visual impacts of renewable project development
- Economic impacts (tax treatment, land leases)
- Municipal planning/zoning lacking

The Land Development Pressure Hierarchy



Potential Impacts to Farmland from Solar Project Development

- Loss of prime and important farmland soils;
- Loss of agricultural production, impacts to the food system, and reduced access to fresh, locally grown food;
- Loss of forest land and habitat, and fragmentation of fields and farms;
- Impacts to the visual landscape and scenic vistas that could affect tourism, compromise valuable cultural landscapes, and result in a loss of sense of place that is highly valued in a community;
- Barriers to succession planning and proper soils management and fertilization;
- Reduced potential for agritourism; and
- Fast-evolving solar technologies could lead to decommissioning and disposal issues for abandoned or obsolete panels.

The Big Question:

How can we promote accelerated renewable energy development meant to reduce the long term impacts of climate change, without producing unacceptable near-term land use impacts?



There are solutions!

- ROGR – principles and recommendations
- Low-impact PV development
- Guidance on planning and zoning





**Thank You!
Questions?**

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