

Into the Woods: Solar Fields in the Forest

Climate Change Needs

- >> To reduce fossil fuel consumption
- >> To curb greenhouse gas emissions
- >> To reduce carbon dioxide already emitted
- >> To increase reliance on renewable energy

Benefits of a Forest

- >> Protect water quality
- >> Create habitat
- >> Capture and store carbon dioxide
- >> Provide shade and cooling
- >> Provide recreation and enjoyment

Energy Goals

RI: 100% renewable energy by 2030

MA: 40% renewable energy by 2030

How do we balance energy needs with forest benefits?

ASK OURSELVES...

What was the land before a solar field was proposed?

What could the land be if it was **not** developed as a solar field?

Was the change from forest to solar?
Was the change from pavement to solar?

What is the best use of the land?



Solar field in forested area



Solar field in developed area



Limited State Control:

Rhode Island and Massachusetts have **REGULATIONS** that **PROTECT** wetlands, buffer zones between wetlands and dry lands (upland), endangered species, and drinking water



FEW REGULATIONS PROTECTING UPLAND FORESTS



If the project follows the existing regulations, Rhode Island and Massachusetts *cannot reject a solar field application simply because it's located in a forest*

RI TOWN CONTROL:

RI TOWNS can change their zoning **ordinances** to restrict where solar fields can be developed. Towns that have done this have placed limits on forest loss.

MA STATE & TOWN CONTROL:

MA STATE law **limits** the powers of towns to regulate solar fields. Towns can adopt **bylaws** to impose reasonable regulations protecting public health, safety, or welfare.

STAY TUNED

Solar field maps and data coming soon!

What do we need to know?

- >> Where are the solar fields located in the watershed?
- >> How can we ensure forested areas are protected?
- >> How can we incentivize placing solar fields on already developed land (like covered parking lots and rooftops)?
- >> How can we empower municipalities to make zoning ordinance changes to protect forests?