

**VNRLI Policy Action Workgroup on  
Solar Facility Siting*****An Exercise in Equitable Collaboration  
And Rapid Innovation Cycle****April 2021***Executive Summary**

In partnership with the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP), with counsel from Governor Ralph Northam's administration and funding from the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE), UVA's Institute of Engagement & Negotiation (IEN) formed a pilot Policy Action Workgroup on the issue of solar facility siting, land disturbance, and land use. The workgroup convened in advance of the Governor's Summit on Equitable Collaboration, beginning in December 2020. In consultation with the VDOP and Governor's administration, members were selected by IEN from the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI) alumni to participate in this Workgroup. Thirteen VNRLI alumni were invited to participate based on their representation of different sectors (private, public, nonprofit), different geographic regions, specific interests (e.g., locality planning/ land use, developers, environmental, landowners), technical knowledge, as well as their abilities in Equitable Collaboration, consensus building, collaborative problem-solving and other processes taught by VNRLI.

Over the course of five Workgroup meetings (held over Zoom) from mid-December through mid-February, along with numerous subgroup meetings, the Workgroup explored issues of land use and solar siting through the lens of Equitable Collaboration framework. This framework developed by IEN, focuses on six elements – adaptive, deliberative, inclusive, responsive, trauma-informed, and truth-seeking. IEN developed a detailed online (Google doc) worksheet to guide them through these questions using the Equitable Collaboration framework ([See Appendix 3](#)), in order to facilitate an easier virtual collaboration. Through consensus building and collaborative thinking, the Workgroup established a shared goal that describes the focus of the process, helps all stakeholders see that their interests are understood, and does not predetermine outcomes. Environmental Justice (EJ) was a particular point of emphasis throughout the Workgroup's work. An EJ Subgroup was created at the start of this process to focus on these issues and incorporate them into the Workgroup's shared goal and broader recommendations.

**Process and Methodology**

The focus of the Policy Action Workgroup was centered on solar facility siting in the Commonwealth of Virginia. According to UVA's Weldon Cooper Center modeling, increasing

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solar energy in the Commonwealth will be a vital element of achieving the Governor’s goal of zero carbon emissions by 2050. It is hoped that the Workgroup’s review and process recommendations will help the Commonwealth create a path for solar that minimizes impacts on land use and natural resources.

The Workgroup accomplished its work in five primary meetings, with additional subgroup meetings, and met from mid-December to mid-February. The primary meetings were facilitated by IEN staff, with additional meetings coordinated by Workgroup members and subgroups. During the first meeting, IEN staff encouraged members to self-appoint committee chairs for the large group meetings, as well as the subgroups.

The core questions the Workgroup explored were:

- How can the state balance renewable energy development with impacts on working lands (e.g., forestland conversion)?
- What is the potential impact on land use and natural resources of the Commonwealth?
- What specific state policies could be considered to minimize these impacts?

The group’s work was centered around a collaborative worksheet designed by IEN staff that addressed questions of equitable collaboration and guided the overall process ([see Appendix 4](#)). This worksheet guided the discussions, identified potential stakeholder needs, incorporated responsive practices, etc. The Workgroup also assembled three key subgroups designed to address various aspects of solar siting. These subgroups included the Environmental Justice subgroup, the Landowners subgroup, and the Natural Resources subgroup.

Members worked within the Framework of Equitable Collaboration, which “refers to a particular type of public deliberation...that addresses community spaces where power, historical trauma, and ongoing disparities are at stake. These disparities are commonly found along racial, ethnic, religious, class, gender, or other lines of identity. By focusing on trauma-informed practices, inclusion, responsiveness, truth-seeking, deliberation, and adaptability, equitable collaboration promotes equitable and sustainable processes and outcomes.”<sup>1</sup>

The first task of the Workgroup was to identify the major interests in Virginia’s solar facility siting issues. The key interest groups identified by the Workgroup include agriculture, air quality, aviation, biodiversity, clean energy, climate change, cultural/historic, employment, economy, forestry, property rights, recreation, scenic value/viewshed, water quality, and wildlife habitat ([See Appendix 4](#)).

Through consensus building and collaborative thinking, the group established a shared goal that describes the focus of the process, helps all stakeholders see that their interests are understood, and does not predetermine outcomes.

### Workgroup Shared Goal:

*To best ensure the balanced and equitable development of solar energy to meet Virginia’s clean energy goals while incorporating environmental justice, protecting*

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<sup>1</sup> Transforming Community Spaces, [transformingcommunityspaces.org](https://transformingcommunityspaces.org).

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*Virginia's natural resources, addressing land ownership concerns, and supporting local economic benefits.*

### **Policy Recommendations**

During the final meeting of the Policy Action Workgroup, members were asked to compile a list of policy recommendations that were subsequently presented at the Governor's Summit and submitted to state leaders and the Governor's Office for possible action. These recommendations included:

- Develop a comprehensive toolkit for localities and stakeholders;
- Update stormwater and erosion and sediment control standards, incorporating climate change and resilience.
- Form a statewide Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to identify and evaluate updated SWM and E&S technology
  - The TAC should recommend updates to the manual for utility-scale solar site development.
- The Commonwealth should adopt policies that prioritize and incentivize the use of previously developed project sites (brownfields) and other marginalized agricultural or silvicultural land for utility-scale solar sites.
- A stakeholder group should be assembled to identify potential funding opportunities and to offer recommendations.
- Develop a process to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the entire solar siting process from site exploration through decommissioning.

### **Comprehensive Toolkit for Communities and Stakeholders**

During the first three meetings, Workgroup members consulted a variety of stakeholders that helped inform these policy recommendations, as well as items that should be included in a comprehensive toolkit for localities. Meeting 1 introduced the topic with a presentation by The Nature Conservancy's Senior Conservation Scientist, Judy Dunscomb. Meeting 2 held a panel focusing on the local government perspective, and Meeting 3 invited various solar developer stakeholders (*The full list of subject matter experts can be found in [Appendix 2](#)*). The panel discussions and subgroup meetings allowed the Workgroup to consider various perspectives and incorporate them into the policy recommendations. Items that should be included in the comprehensive toolkit for localities are listed below:

- GIS mapping tool with layers for:
  - Existing transmission infrastructure
  - Brownfields/abandoned mine land
  - Marginalized agricultural/silvicultural lands
  - EJ communities
- Best management practices
  - Decommissioning
  - Soil Health
  - Habitat protection

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- Agri-voltaics/pollinators
- Templates containing appropriate emphasis on equity/Environmental Justice issues:
  - Model ordinances
  - Siting agreements
  - Conditional/Special Use Permits
  - Outreach/education strategies including EJ principles
  - Maintenance agreements
  - Cost/benefit tools

### **Environmental Justice**

Environmental Justice (EJ) was a point of emphasis throughout the group's work. The EPA defines "environmental justice" as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. An Environmental Justice Subgroup was created at the start of this process to focus on these issues and incorporate them in the group's shared goal and broader recommendations. The Workgroup highlight key concerns in regard to EJ and solar facility siting.

Key EJ concerns highlighted by the Workgroup include:

- Not engaging EJ communities from the beginning
- Historic harm/trauma
- Mitigation that fits community needs
- Lack of mapping EJ communities

The Workgroup suggested the development of a process to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the entire solar siting process. This includes from site exploration through decommissioning. Strategies explored for this process are listed as follows:

- EJ communities mapped in collaboration with localities
- EJ included in zoning and comprehensive plans
- EJ histories recorded and considered during the solar siting process
- Collaborate with Council on EJ, DEQ's Director of Environmental Justice, and/or Interagency Working Group on EJ
- Practices informed by the local community to mitigate negative impacts
- Legal, financial, and development assistance for EJ communities

### **Outcomes**

The Workshop presented its findings and recommendations on Day 2 of the Governor's Summit on Equitable Collaboration and on to the VDOF Board of Forestry. Its recommendations are being considered now by the VDOF. This pilot study exemplified how rapid innovation processes can move forward in a short timeframe when consensus-building, shared leadership, and the values of equitable collaboration are put to use. Following the Summit, recordings from the Workgroup presentation have been made available to the public on the event website: [www.equitablecollaboration.org](http://www.equitablecollaboration.org). The Policy Action Workgroup report and presentation are posted on the Summit website. This website will continue to serve as a 'living' resource for

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Summit participants, and others interested in contributing toolkits and information related to Equitable Collaboration. Broad dissemination of results of both the Policy Action Workgroup and the Governor's Summit will occur when the Administration has released its "next steps" on the eight policy topic areas discussed at the Summit.

## Appendix One: List of Participants

### Local government:

- **Jonét Provost-White**, Director of Public Works, Town of Dumfries (*VNRLI 2016*)

### Academia:

- **Kim Hodge**, Director of Sustainability Initiatives and Education, Washington and Lee University (*VNRLI 2010*)
- **John Ignosh**, Biological Systems Engineering, Virginia Tech & Virginia Cooperative Extension (*VNRLI 2009*)

### Soil & Water Conservation Districts:

- **Frank Johnson**, Chief Leadership Officer, Hope for Family and Business Prosperity, LLC (*VNRLI 2015*)

### State agencies:

- **Mike Skiffington**, Director of Policy and Planning, Dept. of Mines, Minerals and Energy (*VNRLI 2018*)
- **Dan Redgate**, Water Resources Program Manager, Virginia Department of Transportation (*VNRLI 2018*)

### Nonprofits:

- **Hali Plourde-Rogers**, Executive Director, Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (*VNRLI 2019*)
- **Daria Christian**, Executive Director, Friends of the Rappahannock (*VNRLI 2018*)
- **Concha Mendoza**, Operations Manager, Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River (*VNRLI 2020*)

### Private sector:

- **Kip Mumaw**, Founder and Principal, Ecosystem Services (*VNRLI 2018*)
- **Amelia Boschen**, Supervisor, Environmental Regulations, Dominion Energy Environment and Sustainability (*VNRLI 2020*)

### Landowner:

- **Jason Fisher**, Extension Agent Halifax County, Virginia Cooperative Extension (*VNRLI 2013*)

Roles and Positions	
Michael Skiffington and Kim Hodge	Workgroup Co-Chairs
Frank Johnson, Jonét Prevost-White, Concha Mendoza, Kim Hodge, Hali Plourde-Rogers	EJ Subgroup (Co-Chairs: Frank Johnson & Jonét Prevost-White)
Jason Fisher & Terry Lasher	Land Ownership Subgroup

## **Appendix Two: List of Subject Matter Experts**

**Throughout the course of the Workgroup's charge, several subject matter experts attended meetings and engaged in panels. These subject matter experts included:**

- *Judy Dunscomb - Senior Conservation Scientist, The Nature Conservancy*
- *Scott Simpson - County Administrator, Halifax County*
- *John Bateman - Regional Planner, Northern Neck Planning District Commission*
- *Brian Barnes - Director of Planning and Land Use, Lancaster County*
- *Todd Flowers - Manager, Business Development*
- *Scott Foster - Gentry Locke Attorneys*
- *Drew Price - Hexagon Energy*
- *Rachel Smucker - Maryland-DC-Delaware-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association (in attendance, but did not participate in panel)*
- *Carrie Hearne - (Solar Program Manager, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy)*

## Appendix Three: Framework for Equitable Collaboration



**Trauma-Informed** – Focus on historical and current relationships, and prepare and support people in ways that prevent, minimize, or mitigate trauma



**Inclusive** – Reach all segments of a community, and account for racial, ethnic, gender, class and other dynamics as integral for meaningful participation



**Responsive** - Acknowledge and respond to community questions, needs, concerns and ideas in timely and meaningful ways



**Truth-Seeking** – Invite honest, complete histories, even when such histories may be painful to hear and to understand



**Deliberative** – Foster brave spaces where participants honestly and openly confront past and present, for learning, growing, and shared civic thinking



**Adaptive** – Develop appropriate goals and process for each situation, while adjusting as circumstances change

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Much More Information Available at

*Transforming Community Spaces*

“TCS Toolkit”: [Transforming Community Spaces: Home](#)

## Appendix Four: Worksheet for Equitable Collaboration

### The Workgroup Charge:

This workgroup's goal is to help the Commonwealth create a path for solar that minimizes impacts on land use and natural resources. The following are examples of key questions the PAWG will be asked to address:

- How can the state balance renewable energy development with impacts on working lands (e.g., forestland conversion)?
- What is the potential impact on land use and natural resources of the Commonwealth?
- What specific state policies could be considered to minimize these impacts?

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### Phase 1: Conceiving the Process with Equity

#### Situation Assessment

#### 1. IDENTIFY INTERESTS: In the table below, identify the major interests in Virginia's solar facility siting issues

- First, identify the categories of significant interests:
  - Those who are directly or indirectly impacted by solar facilities
  - Those who are decision makers
  - Those who are likely to oppose
  - Those who have technical expertise and can help resolution
  - Be sure to think about vulnerable or underrepresented populations, as well as those who are not afforded the same opportunities of access to the opportunity of solar facilities
- Second identify categories of groups representing those interests. For example, if the interest is water quality, that interest might be represented by a local environmental group, and also the state DEQ.
- Third, identify what's at stake for the groups that represent those interests.
- Last, after you have completed your list, remember to test for consensus that your team agrees that these are all the appropriate interest

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CATEGORIES of INTERESTS (e.g., environmental, habitat)	WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR GROUPS REPRESENTING THOSE INTEREST	
	GROUPS REPRESENTING THOSE INTERESTS	WHAT'S AT STAKE ( - ) : potential negative outcome ( + ) : potential positive outcome
Employment	Workforce development, Chamber of Commerce(s)	-loss of jobs from regions reliant on producing energy from nonrenewable resources  -job are not created locally; companies tend to bring in their own employees  +job creation in renewable energy  +employment opportunity for those disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel production
Economy (local)	PDCs, Economic Development Authority, Board Of Supervisors/City Council, power companies, landowners, businesses, Localities, community solar, neighboring landowners, energy consumers	-loss of revenue for localities, devaluation of neighboring property and loss of intergenerational family wealth, potential unknown decommissioning economic and environmental costs  -for some projects, the energy doesn't stay local  +tax incentives, local landowners benefit  +lease income  +proffers to benefit the community like investment in broadband or schools  +lowering bills for those most in need of a lower energy bill
Biodiversity	DCR-NH, TNC, wetland boards, native plant societies, FWS	-habitat fragmentation, genetic fragmentation or reduction of genetic diversity, loss of habitat, reduction of biological complexity
Private property rights	Black Family Land Trust, VA United Land Trusts	- Heir property, mineral rights, etc., parceling of the land, tension between heirs as to what to

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	(Ellen Shephard), Neighboring landowners	do with the property for larger project, intergenerational transfer issues  -devaluation of neighboring property and loss of intergenerational family wealth  + Smaller projects can be attractive, smaller projects require less oversight and less statewide approval
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Water quality	Watermen, fisheries, NGOs (CBF, FOR, JRA, Potomac Conservancy, Elizabeth River Project, Lynnhaven River Now, Trout Unlimited), local land trusts	- Sedimentation, potential pollution from broken panels  + less reliance on fossil fuels is good for water quality
Viewshed/scenic values	Scenic Virginia, local land trusts, local tourism	-Tourism, loss of viewsheds from trails/waterways  +ecotourism opportunity trail with signs exploring the benefits of renewable energy
Wildlife Habitat	DWR, USFWS, NGOs, local land trusts, DCR-NH	-Loss of habitat for wildlife, endangered species habitat, migration routes  +pollinator habitat compatible with solar
Recreation (Hunting)	DWR, Hunt Clubs, Ducks Unlimited	-You can't hunt on a solar field, see wildlife habitat
Cultural/historical	Native peoples/ Indigenous Tribes, DHR, NGOs (American Battlefield Trust), historically underserved, disadvantaged, and impacted communities	- Impacts on culturally important lands or sites  -Loss of historic sites, homesteads, burial grounds
Agriculture	Farm Bureau, NGOs, SWCD, NRCS, farmers/producers, local land trusts etc., Farmers	- Unable to farmland for a set number of years, soil health, decommissioning and site remediation

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	including those who don't own land	-loss of farmland for rent + Diversification of income streams, potential to continue farming some land +Co-location of small grazing livestock (sheep, chickens) +lease income
Air quality	NGOs (Sierra Club)	+reduce CO2/fossil fuel burning
Climate change	VA State + local government (Sierra Club)	-restricts marsh migration and facilitated retreat  +reduce CO2 +reuse of marginal/salt inundated agricultural land
Forestry	DOF, DWR, USFS, local land trusts, NGOs	- Incompatible use  + Forests could be planted after lifespan of solar site, conversion of marginal ag land to a solar site with better land conservation management, could require riparian buffers on solar sites
Aviation	FAA, DOD	-Reflection from solar panels in flight paths, sentinel landscapes
Clean energy	DMME, Dominion, Appalachian Power, Co-ops, Sierra Club, renewable energy developers	Meeting state solar energy goals, +CO2 reduction
Lifecycle of panels	-recycling, landfill, waste management	-waste stream during production and after decommissioning sites  +opportunity for reuse of materials

**OTHER NOTES + Questions to Consider**

**Natural Resources group:**

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1. How are we classifying these solar sites? Are they considered impervious? Are they considered turf? What is being planted underneath? Natives, grasses, habitat? Beneficial for wildlife? Soil stabilization prioritized?
2. Erosion control measures: Not currently up to par. How will this be addressed in solar siting?
3. Will the change in runoff be measured after the site has been built? How will this be mitigated?
4. Properties are zoned agricultural. Should properties need to be rezoned for industrial in order to build on agricultural land?
5. Incentivizing research and development is important since technologies can be improved before many large-scale projects are started.
6. What is the process for decommissioning a site (e.g., soil health, construction practice, etc.)?
7. Should clarify what is being referred to as a “buffer.” Distinction between resource buffer (e.g. riparian buffer) vs. viewshed buffer.
8. Do these projects create local jobs or do they rely on labor from outside of the site locality?
9. Local infrastructure to support development offsite? Roads, other resources (emergency response, etc.)
10. Construction phasing -- (rather than disturbing all land at once, do work in sections/phases/stages) or (only disturb x amount a land at a time until can move on to next phase until they improve x or meet standards)
11. Is rezoning or a special use permit from agricultural to industrial a deterrent to developers or landowners?
12. Tie large development of impervious surface to onsite solar generation. Require a percentage of onsite solar generation.
13. What’s the cost of developing on open lands vs. developed lands?
14. Incentivize developed lands and marginal agricultural lands.
15. Intervals for reevaluation

### **Landowner Group:**

1. What might be afforded a landowner in future use consulting at contract termination or restructuring? (ie: conversion to pasture, pollinator, timber, prior use, etc.)
2. Some considerations for impacts on intergenerational land transfer and/or future ownership impacts.
3. Educational materials for landowners made available through local administration (BOS, PDC, planners, county administrators) to share.

### **Environmental Justice Group**

1. Are there EJ guidance documents for solar siting or general EJ guidance that could be adapted?
2. Are there examples of successful solar projects in the US with consideration to EJ?
3. What questions would help guide the EJ process for solar siting?

### **Phase 2: SHARED GOAL**

**Develop a Shared Goal Statement that 1) Identifies the Decision Space by Describing What is The Focus of the Discussion (and what is not); 2) Helps all Stakeholders See that Their Interests are Understood; and 3) Does Not Predetermine Outcomes**

1. Identify the “decision space” - what is/is not open for discussion. For example, the focus of the PAWG’s Charge is on the realm of state action.

- a. Not open for discussion
  - i. Community Solar: Developed spaces.
  - ii. Residential Solar
  - iii. Incentivization for community or residential or smaller-scale solar
- b. Open for discussion
  - i. Agriculture lands, large spaces
  - ii. Incentivization for utility solar
  - iii. State policy

**2. Identify if there are any principles, procedures, or standards that need to be incorporated into the ultimate solution. These standards can be included in the draft shared goals as part of the “decision space” if they are required or important for you to establish at the outset. E.g. Our goal for this process is to discuss XYZ in a way that ensures minimum instream flow.**

- a. Comprehensive toolbox that consists of: Decision-making tool to help jurisdictions in zoning and land use planning - with EJ incorporated and Solar siting tool (TNC siting model as a starting point)
- b. Engage stakeholder groups in the creation of and review/update of all tools to ensure tools continue to meet the needs of localities/communities
- c. Incentivize Jurisdictions to have EJ included in requests. Comprehensive plans can include EJ. (ex. Virginia Land Conservation grants have an EJ score to incentivize it).
- d. Checklist for solar siting projects
- e. How to best ensure VA meets its goal of reducing reliance on fossil fuels for energy production while still protecting and conserving our natural resources.
- f. Responsibility during construction phase (E&S), prioritizing and incentivizing marginalized land, minimizing impact during decommissioning, best practices for best soil health (ie, ground cover), protection of wildlife habitat, review impacts on T&E species, incentivizing co-location of pollinator habitat and pasture for grazing livestock,

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- g. Work with localities to develop statewide EJ communities map (can be a layer added to solar siting tool)
  - h. Ability to model potential future issues with site and impact on community where site is developed
  - i. EJ included from the beginning of the process
  - j. Suggest that PDCs ensure that EJ is represented.
  - k. Coordinate with DEQ Director of Environmental Justice in development of statewide solar siting tools and checklists/templates - to ensure localities have what they need to include EJ in the solar siting process.
  - l. Statewide incentivization or prioritization of beneficial EJ solar siting projects
  - m. Prioritization or ranking of statewide utility-scale projects beneficial to EJ communities, with consultation from DEQ Director of Environmental Justice and the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice.
- 3. Review the core interests and what is at stake for them and identify the ones that must be reflected in the shared goal statement.**
- 4. Is there a history of harm or trauma experienced by any of the stakeholders? If so, how can you acknowledge or be mindful of this in the shared goal statement, to indicate your awareness and desire to not recreate or add to the trauma?**
- a. Runoff issues of current utility scale project (Mr. Hill and the solar facility site in Essex County). Leading to fines for community.
  - b. Economic trauma from not owning the land and being exploited for energy generation. Doesn't necessarily lower electric bills. Economic benefit is not distributed. Adjacent properties could see a reduction in value. Property taxes would also go down, but so would property values. Counties not seeing a tax benefit from utility scale solar.
  - c. History of harm in localities where fossil fuels have been extracted and in communities with brownfields. History of harm for tribal communities. All potential sites for utility scale solar
- 5. Write a shared goal statement that is inclusive of all the key interests, reflects awareness of and sensitivity to past histories, and clearly defines the decision space.**
- To best ensure the balanced and equitable development of solar energy to meet Virginia's clean energy goals while incorporating environmental justice, protecting Virginia's natural resources, addressing land ownership concerns, and supporting local economic benefits.*

**2. What are the Obstacles (known and potential) to Successful (successful from the Commonwealth's perspective) Solar Facility Siting?**

- a. State agency concerns, challenges?
  - i. Regulation enforcement during construction, operation and decommission, lack of complete and quality data
  
- b. Localities' concerns, challenges?  
Not enough information for good decision-making, do not have comp plans, codes/ordinances up to date to address, cost-prohibitive grid modernization, limited local benefit
  
- c. Landowners' concerns, challenges?  
Getting a fair deal, transparency from solar companies, pushback from neighbors or locality in permitting, bonding
  
- d. Conservationists' concerns, challenges?  
Protecting and conserving VA's natural resources while still promoting renewable energy
  
- e. Working lands' advocates concerns, challenges?  
Returning the land back to working land, soil health, contamination potential, cohabitation
  
- f. Underrepresented populations' concerns, challenges?
  - i. They will not benefit from this activity, damage to property from adjacent properties, disregard for cultural/heritage sites
  
- g. Any other concerns, challenges?
- h. What additional concerns, challenges?
- i. Will there be contested data and histories, and how will you know which data and histories are those that need to be privileged? Is there any risk of opening the door to conversation without the ability to carry through, and therefore not being responsive?

**3. What are the Opportunities (known and potential) to Successful (successful from the Commonwealth's perspective) Solar Facility Siting?**

- j. State agency opportunities?  
Updates to erosion and sediment control measures, collect quality data, solar siting mapping tool, share case studies and local ordinances, share lessons learned, engage stakeholders representing different interests

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- k. Localities' opportunities?  
Bargaining power via proffers/siting agreements, share case studies and ordinances
- l. Landowners' opportunities?  
Making marginalized land useful, potential for increased soil health at the end of the project period, to make money on leases and/or save on utility bills
- m. Conservationists' opportunities?  
Reduction in fossil fuel use, protection of sensitive/critical lands/habitats
- n. Working lands' advocates opportunities?  
Potential for increased soil health at the end of the project period
- o. Underrepresented populations' opportunities?
  - i. Income

Test for consensus that you've covered the ground on potential opportunities.

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### **4. Identify information needs that may be needed to ensure that informed decisions are able to be made?**

**Information needs for the Commonwealth: what information will be needed during agency discussions, internally or with localities or with stakeholders? What information will be important to provide to stakeholders and community members?**

- Ordinance and land-use agreement templates
- Stormwater policies and guidelines
- Mapping and data (land use, SLR, marsh migration, T&E, precipitation, etc.)
- Grid capacity and modeling for updates

#### **Information Needs (agency, etc.):**

1. Definition of EJ - Council on EJ could provide a working definition (EPA definition)
2. Financial model (how landowner, local government, solar company, utility, etc. benefit financially)
3. EJ map/GIS overlay
4. Effective communication (avoiding the perception of “another pity-party for ‘poor folks’” etc.).
5. Energy grid knowledge (where large-scale projects are and are not possible, what grid modernization would require)
6. Legal challenges and how community involvement reduces them.

#### **Information Needs (stakeholder and community):**

1. Definition of EJ - Council on EJ could provide a working definition (EPA definition)
2. Understanding of the financial model (how do you or can you benefit?)
3. Actual presentation about EJ (sometimes you don't know until someone tells you)
4. Graphics, charts, contact info, etc. of where EJ is included (Ex. DEQ-permit level, local Zoning/Land Use, Comprehensive plans, maybe in procurement (RFPs, etc.).
5. Energy grid knowledge (where large-scale projects are and are not possible, what grid modernization would require)
6. Knowledge about energy transition and what renewable energy and energy efficiency options are available in a community.

### **Develop a Set of Recommendations for Consideration by the Governor's Cabinet, including the Department of Forestry, One of the Key Workgroup Clients**

*Considering all of the above interests, challenges, opportunities and information needs, develop answers to the following questions in terms of potential state policy considerations or state*

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*processes or other actions at the state level that may be helpful and supportive to ensuring that development of renewable energy development is balanced with impacts on working lands, land use, and natural resources.*

Tiers - policy, resources, needs, who is impacted, who benefits

### **A. How can the Commonwealth balance renewable energy development with impacts on working lands (e.g., deforestation), showing that it is responsive to and inclusive to the interests and challenges of the different stakeholders?**

#### **Policy recommendations**

1. Develop updated ESC & SWM standards that ensure land and water quality protection as part of large-scale solar utility site development. These updated standards shall incorporate climate change and resiliency considerations.
  - a. Resources/Tools
    - i. Revise Erosion and Sediment Controls and Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual as whole or develop Manual specifically for utility-scale solar site development.
    - ii. Form a statewide Technical Advisory Committee to identify and evaluate updated ESC/SWM technology (i.e., measures and practices) for inclusion in updated ESC/SWM manuals.
  - b. Needs
    - i. Commission the development of updated climate data (rainfall frequency/duration data, storm recurrence interval) for use in ESC/SWM planning and design.
2. In order to protect our most valuable land uses (forests, prime ag land, priority conservation lands), update existing or develop new state policies and practices that prioritize and incentivize the use of previously developed project sites and other unproductive ag land for large-scale solar sites (e.g., repurpose of mined lands, brownfields, poor agricultural/silvicultural lands).
  - a. Resources/Tools
    - i. Identify funding opportunities for repurposing of previously developed project sites and unproductive ag land
    - ii. Statewide stakeholder group comprising solar industry, agricultural/silvicultural partners, conservation groups, municipal government, etc. To be organized and run by the Virginia Department of Forestry.
      1. Stakeholder group given the power to recommend legislation, policies, tax incentives, etc.

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- b. Needs
  - i. Develop a comprehensive data layer of marginal lands for use with Solar Site Mapping Tool.
- 3. Develop a well-informed, science-based process for developing large-scale industrial solar sites. In order to do so, develop a comprehensive toolbox for localities and stakeholders to address issues associated with siting to include:
  - a. GIS Mapping Tool with layers for:
    - i. Existing transmission infrastructure
    - ii. Brownfields/abandoned/orphaned mine land
    - iii. Marginalized ag/solar lands
    - iv. HEDCs/EJ communities
    - v. Property values
  - b. Best Management Practices
    - i. Decommissioning
    - ii. Soil health
    - iii. Habitat protection
    - iv. Agri-voltaics
    - v. Pollinators
    - vi. Projected performance vs. actual performance of site BMPs
      - 1. Stormwater control issues
      - 2. Stand establishment
  - c. Templates, with appropriate emphasis on equity/EJ issues:
    - i. Model ordinances
    - ii. Siting agreements
    - iii. Conditional or special use permits
    - iv. Comp. plan language
    - v. Outreach/education strategies
    - vi. Maintenance agreements
    - vii. Cost/benefit tools for development, O&M, long-term owner/operators
    - viii. Environmental Justice policies, process, and considerations
  - d. Incentives (marginalized and degraded lands)
    - i. Funding
  - e. Educational programming for key stakeholders/audiences
- 4. Require local stakeholder input
  - a. Local/municipal level, to include representatives from industry, Environmental Justice community, businesses, education, landowners, etc.
  - b. Provide guidance and input throughout the length of the project

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- c. Report/collaborate with Council on Environmental Justice, DEQ's Director of Environmental Justice and/or Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice
  - i. Proof of Environmental Justice considerations given to these entities throughout the project - how EJ was considered from the beginning through decommissioning
  
- 5. Develop a process to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the entire solar siting process from siting through decommissioning
  - a. Resources/Tools
    - i. EJ communities mapped in collaboration with localities
    - ii. EJ included in zoning, comprehensive plans
  - b. Needs
    - i. EJ histories recorded and considered during the solar siting process
    - ii. Collaborate with Council on Environmental Justice and DEQ's Director of Environmental Justice, and/or Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice
    - iii. Practices informed by the local community to mitigate negative impacts
    - iv. Legal, financial, and development assistance for EJ communities
      - 1. For example, energy bill reduction for EJ communities
    - v. Within county comprehensive plans, identify a stakeholder task force/steering committee when approached by solar development. (locality)
    - vi. Create guidance on EJ
    - vii. Prioritize using already degraded or cleared land that may not be suitable for housing and does not disproportionately impact EJ communities, etc., but can be used for renewable energy.

**How can the Commonwealth balance renewable energy development with potential impacts on land use and natural resources, showing that it is responsive and inclusive to the interests and challenges of the different stakeholders?**

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- Can any degraded sites such as quarries, etc. be “fixed” in full by the renewable energy company and then they can use it for renewable energy? In other words, if you fix this land, then it is yours and no charges for purchasing the land etc. (Fix might mean, habitat, vegetation, buffers, etc., the full dream of conservation).
- Use of remediated sites or degraded sites (brownfields) for renewable energy sites.
- Require buffers to protect water resources. Incentivize best soil health practices. Update erosion and sediment control guidance. Protection of habitat and T&E species.

**What specific policies could the Commonwealth consider to minimize these impacts, and maximize the opportunities available to different stakeholders, demonstrating that it is responsive and inclusive to the needs of all impacted**

Educational: maps and actual presentations that can teach the public about land impacts, human impacts, etc. In other words, a PowerPoint presentation with pictures etc.

EJ communities as a higher consideration in the siting decision - if an EJ community is in the area, work closely with them to ensure they're ok with the project. Or ensure that they get enough significant, associated benefits from the project (for example - assistance with schools, affordable broadband, lower energy bills, energy efficiency, workforce development, eliminating food deserts) that they approve of. How do we mitigate the impact of the project - (specific to the community and the project with significant community involvement in identifying needs)?

**How do you suggest the Commonwealth involve the broader public in discussions and negotiation, and be responsive to their questions and concerns?**

- Informational outreach and education campaign to landowners and localities.
- Stakeholder taskforce
- Education (See response letter E above).
- Community involvement from the beginning of the process, including preferred methods for information sharing and for sharing community input.
- Establishment of an EJ advocacy group/organization, potentially specific to renewable energy.

**Are there specific thorny issues that may need to be approached differently? If histories of harm have been experienced, how can the process be trauma-informed, meaning how can (or should) these be surfaced in a way that does not add to that harm? What existing relationships and networks might be brought into the fold to surface and/or address these harms? E.g. might faith leaders or community activists play a role here?**

- Environmental Justice principles included in education effort towards public.
- Include the Council on Environmental Justice and the DEQ EJ Director
- Yes include faith leaders, NAACP chapters, trusted businesses and trusted news sources for EJ communities.

**If histories or data are contested, how can the process be truth-seeking?**

- What are existing or baseline histories or data? Census records, deeds, property listings (acknowledge Native American ownership, pre-Colonial through slavery to present day), medical statistics, etc.

**Would special processes, such as mediation or a special study, be helpful to address any anticipated obstacles**

- EJ specific study for projects over a specific size (50MW?).
- Urban vs Rural Divide
  - New Approach: Stakeholder engagement to avoid feeling of being “left out” (i.e., non-transparent development)

**Looking at the barriers/obstacles you identified above, what are ways that you would suggest overcoming or addressing these barriers/obstacles? How will you ensure these strategies are *responsive* and will build, not detract from, the legitimacy of the Commonwealth’s decision process?**

- Environmental Justice considered from the beginning and throughout the project
- Negative impacts minimized and mitigated (community informed)
- Community involvement throughout whole process, including decision-making

## Appendix Five: Meeting Notes

### Meeting 1 Notes

#### *VNRLI POLICY ACTION WORKGROUP*

*on*

#### *Solar Facility Siting*

**DECEMBER 15, 2020**

**9:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

Attendees: Kim Hodge, Concha Mendoza, Amelia Boschen, Rob Farrell, Mike Foreman, Tanya Denckla Cobb, Kelly Altizer, Alexandra Cook, Jonet Prevost-White, Kip Mumaw, Daria Christian, Dan Redgate, Michael Skiffington, John Ignosh, Jason Fisher, Terry Lasher, Judy Dunscomb, Jessica Harris, Alexandra Cook, Daniel Goldstein, Hali Plourde-Rogers, Bettina Ring

#### Intro Section

Tanya - Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wanted to give VNRLI alumni an opportunity to use their skills towards helping the Commonwealth.</li> </ul>
Kelly - Intros of the Group	See attendees.
Bettina Ring & Rob Farrell - Opening Remarks	

#### Lands Available for Solar Facility Siting: Challenges and Opportunities - Judy Dunscomb

Solar Siting Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power of Place in California is the gold standard</li> <li>Solution to the problem needs to be tailored to the socioeconomic needs of the area.</li> </ul>
TNC - Solar Model Project Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illustrate potential conflicts between lands suitable for solar development and other natural resources</li> <li>Initiate a conversation about what a “better than business as usual” outcome would look like</li> <li>Engage interested stakeholders in next steps.</li> </ul>
Research Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where in Virginia are lands suitable for solar development?</li> <li>To what extent do these suitable lands conflict with areas of conservation significance?</li> <li>What already degraded lands in Virginia are suitable for solar development?</li> <li>Are there populations that will be disproportionately</li> </ul>

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	<p>advantaged or disadvantaged by solar development?</p>
<p>Polarity Mapping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Idea of moving forward with solar development while protecting land and water conservation.</li> <li>● RED positives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduced GHG</li> <li>○ Economic transition/development</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Negatives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Habitat Loss</li> <li>○ Ag/Forest lands loss</li> <li>○ Water quality degradation</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Land and Water Conservation positives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Abundant habitat for wildlife</li> <li>○ Clean water</li> <li>○ Productive AG &amp; Forest lands</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Negatives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Slowed decarbonization</li> <li>○ Missed economic opportunity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>What makes land suitable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 15% slope threshold (DEM)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The National Map</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Within 3-mi of a transmission line             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ventyx dataset</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Land cover is not already developed or open water             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ NLCD from MRLC consortium</li> </ul> </li> <li>● At least 100 contiguous acres</li> </ul> <p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the lifespan of the facilities?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Permanent for 30 years. Can probably go for longer than that - could go to 40 years.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Once the infrastructure is developed, the highest and best use of the land becomes RED</li> <li>● Can sea level rise impact these areas?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Solar facilities can survive a certain level of flooding, so it can work with regards to a certain level of rise.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● What is the relationship between wind &amp; solar?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wind &amp; natural resources are more of a challenge vs. wind and solar</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Question: Does or can the "Potential Solar Suitable Lands in Virginia" slide overlay marginalized community areas or otherwise Environmental Justice areas?</li> </ul>
<p>What constitutes lands of conservation significance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why did they use Conserve Virginia?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It identifies highest value and highest priority conservation lands</li> <li>○ It represents the full range of natural resources valued by stakeholders</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Seven conservation subsets:</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ag. and Forestry</li> <li>○ Natural Habitat and ecosystem diversity</li> <li>○ Floodplains and flooding resilience</li> <li>○ Cultural and historic preservation</li> <li>○ Scenic preservation</li> <li>○ Protected landscapes resilience</li> <li>○ Water quality improvement</li> </ul>
Cautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Conserve VA is not an exhaustive layer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agencies indicate that Ag and Forestry layer is in need of further development</li> <li>○ Many Heritage Resources are not represented in the Conserve VA layer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Why they looked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential Reduced Land Conversion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ DMME has a solar suitability model for the VA coalfields region</li> <li>○ Solar PBR offers a greatly simplified permit process for “previously disturbed lands”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Places Looked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brownfields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Previously developed and possibly contaminated lands</li> <li>○ Dataset created by EPA</li> <li>○ A point layer that contains addresses at various accuracies of brownfields in VA</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Mined Lands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dataset created by DMME</li> <li>○ A point layer of permitted and pre-permitted mine sites outside of coalfields in VA</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
EPA Brownfields - Singular Brownfields Analysis	Original # of Brownfields: 334
Solar Suitability in Mined Lands	Original # of DMME mined sites: 2,589
Impact of solar development on VA communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In terms of land use, no one community seems to be getting targeted</li> </ul>
Where in VA are lands suitable? & Future Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7.6 million acres total</li> <li>● 26.8% of lands conflict with areas of land conservation</li> <li>● 73.2% do not</li> <li>● 186 sites in DMME layer</li> <li>● At the onset, no obvious injustices</li> </ul>
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is there truth to the rumor that solar systems contaminate the site? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As of now, this seems unlikely.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● With respect to the mine sites, could DMME connect</li> </ul>

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	<p>TNC with the orphaned lands committee?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes! Hope to connect.</li> <li>● Does emergency response require resources and upkeep from the locality?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understanding is that it is no more likely to require these resources than any other structure.</li> <li><b>Could follow up with developers.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● What are next steps to using this as a tool? How does this model zoom in on sites and become more specific / utilized?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assuming there is an appetite for the tool, need to agree on what the natural resources are in that area to avoid (stakeholder process), then data development would need to occur. Then, places wanted to evaluate &amp; promote would need to be put into the tool.</li> <li>○ Who becomes the user of a tool?                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This group could evaluate. Localities, purchasers, (Amazon, Microsoft), utilities, state, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Review any other background topic information supplied by IEN staff and other sources.**

Where will work be used?	<p>Presentation will be given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Governor’s Summit on EC (on Feb 25th)</li> <li>● Board of Forestry</li> </ul>
Look at where we’re headed	Review the worksheet

Questions	<p>What does it mean to have a work group/sub-group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Any subgroup would bring its ideas and suggestions back to the whole group for consideration and discussion.</li> </ul> <p>Wondering the role in some of these conversations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tried to pull from alum network &amp; geographies to have a diverse representation of different interests. Not expecting people to represent their organizations.</li> </ul>
Finalized Findings	By March 1st. (Feb. 15th deadline not Feb. 5th)

**BREAK**

**Review of Equitable Collaboration**

Principles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trauma-Informed</li> <li>2. Inclusive</li> <li>3. Responsive</li> <li>4. Truth-Seeking</li> <li>5. Deliberative</li> <li>6. Adaptive</li> </ol>
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**Other Considerations**

Ideas for Subgroups	<p>Site Suitability (esp. people with GIS skills &amp; experience) / Technical Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking into consideration what obstacles might be in place, bringing Judy’s work into conversation with our work as a group</li> <li>● Making the work more concrete through use of data.</li> <li>● Dan Redgate will serve as the point person for this</li> </ul> <p>Water Quality, Natural Resources, Habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Daria Christian will serve as a point person for this. Dan Goldstein and Concha Mendoza.</li> </ul>
Questions	<p>What is the point of subgroups?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Might be digging deeper into what are the obstacles and what are the opportunity</li> </ul> <p>As we go through knowledge gaps, could subgroups provide a synthesis of questions as they arise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Yes. This work could be supplementing the questions that the main group brings up. Read articles and summarize findings.</li> </ul> <p>No outside work of subgroups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All working together on specific areas of interest and knowledge.</li> </ul> <p>Note: Use the worksheet as compass heading, to avoid going down rabbit holes. Focus towards work and its applicability for localities and stakeholders.</p>

**Information Needs & Future Questions:**

1. What audiences would be interested in a tool such as this? (re: Judy’s presentation)
2. Ask developers: what needs would localities need to invest in this infrastructure?

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3. What specific state policies could be considered to minimize these impacts?

**Meeting 2 Notes**  
**VNRLI POLICY ACTION WORKGROUP**  
**on**  
**Solar Facility Siting**  
**January 5, 2021**  
**1:00 PM - 3:30 PM**

Attendees: Kim Hodge, Concha Mendoza, Amelia Boschen, Rob Farrell, Mike Foreman, Alexandra Cook, Jonet Prevost-White, Kip Mumaw, Daria Christian, Dan Redgate, Michael Skiffington, Jason Fisher, John Ignosh, Terry Lasher, Jessica Harris, Hali Plourde-Rogers, Frank Johnson, John Bateman, Brian Barnes, Scott Simpson.

**Review Last Meeting**

Questions & Concerns, Process, Guest Speaker, Lingering Questions	N/A
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**Updates for the Group**

Michael & Kim Report Out on Conversation with Judy Dunscomb	Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better define the audience for the GIS model.</li> <li>● Make data from DMME more specific (Michael will work on this).</li> <li>● Be sure what makes economic sense for the industry is involved in the policy.</li> <li>● Connect with folks to ensure staying on track (i.e. Amelia)                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Might be helpful to know what energy and criteria are around these issues.</li> <li>○ From an industry perspective, what requirements are there, what questions are there, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> The existing model already captures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distance to existing transmission lines</li> <li>● Scope</li> <li>● Land costs</li> </ul>
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**Subgroup Report**

Environmental Justice	Jonet Prevost-White: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Question 1: What are individual thoughts about first meeting?</li> <li>● Question 2: What are individual thoughts on EJ?</li> <li>● Question 3: What will EJ look like when applied to solar siting?</li> </ul> The genesis of EJ should be policy. Land use policy should be a jumping off point for environmental policy regulations.
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	<p>Discussed having speakers such as Dr. Robert Bullard - father of EJ would be great. Hope to have a telephone call to ask 5 key questions on EJ so that solar siting work considers all aspects of EJ.</p> <p>Homework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Asking ourselves key question - what does EJ look like with solar siting?</li> <li>● Individually try to do a SWAT analysis breakdown of the question and then come together as a group to compare notes.</li> <li>● Brainstorm 5 questions to ask Dr. Bullard individually.</li> <li>● Work on the worksheet.</li> <li>● Map out more meetings.</li> </ul> <p>Notes:</p> <p>Amelia: Dominion does EJ work for all projects. If there are questions that might be considered with regards to EJ and solar, can connect folks with Dominion point person. <b>Amelia will ask her if she would be willing to talk with the subgroup.</b></p>
Land Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jason Fisher:</li> <li>● How do you identify who the land owner is?</li> <li>● Solicit county administrator to get a larger perspective for the landowner.</li> <li>● Many questions still remain, but hope to determine a land owner who might be able to speak to the group.</li> <li>● Terry Lasher:</li> <li>● Important to look at different perspectives:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ land owners who have been contacted,</li> <li>○ land owners pursuing something on their own accord,</li> <li>○ those on the undecided end of the spectrum</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Should start to try to get a cross segment of the population. The people who make decisions in northern VA, folks in the valley, and southern VA should be represented as equally as possible.</li> <li>● Ask these constituents:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the process like? Where was it easy? Where was it difficult? etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Kim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Instead of saying this is what we do, should orient work around ‘these are the questions to ask.</li> <li>● <b>Keep a running list of things that need to be done but we might not get to by Feb.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Next Steps:</b> Seek feedback on deliverables such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short landowner interview.</li> <li>● County administrator interview/recording for summit addressing the questions at hand.</li> </ul>
Natural Resources and	Daria:

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<p>Technical</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Began working through worksheet. (Document link: <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wPM1I-PuSXmHp-4erilnAEHgxpa38sjKcugeqeFyILw/edit#">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wPM1I-PuSXmHp-4erilnAEHgxpa38sjKcugeqeFyILw/edit#</a>)</li> <li>● Realized that some issues around natural resource protection and conservation have to do with larger considerations.</li> <li>● Notes from subgroup on considerations and further thoughts can be found in the Google Drive.</li> <li>● Key Considerations:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Water quality; Viewshed/scenic values; Wildlife; Habitat; Recreation (Hunting); Cultural/historical; Agriculture; Economy (local); Air quality; Climate change; Forestry; Aviation; Clean energy; Private property rights</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Kim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was the tool helpful? Any tweaks needed?</li> </ul> <p>Daria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thinks of stakeholder first and issue second, but the tool was helpful in guiding reflection and discussion.</li> </ul>
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**Work on Worksheets in Breakout Rooms**

<p>Report on Work on Sheet</p>	<p>Group 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hali's group added:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment (workforce development, loss of jobs, and potential for loss of jobs in renewable resources /energy)</li> <li>○ Biodiversity (similar to wildlife / habitat, but slightly broader than that)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Group 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jason added heir property rights &amp; considerations             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Smaller projects may require less oversight.</li> <li>○ Depending on what megawatt project being sought after, could be a different level of energy needed.</li> <li>○ Because these often do not need statewide approval, not sure that people around the state know how many there are.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Other questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Megawatts = how many acres?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Less than 5 megawatts = 50 acres roughly. 1 megawatt/10 acres</li> <li>○ How do we know about companies coming into the state and wanting to do this work?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**BREAK**

**Panel Discussion**

<p>Intros</p>	<p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scott Simpson             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ County Administrator, Halifax County</li> <li>○ Background is in construction, planning, engineering, etc. which morphed into administration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● John Bateman             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regional Planner with Northern Neck Planning District Commission</li> <li>○ Provide technical assistance to local governments</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Brian Barnes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Director of Planning and Land Use in Lancaster County</li> <li>○ Staffs planning commission and handles land use issues as presented to BoS.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Question 1: For your locality, what are your key concerns and hopes about short- and long-term impacts of solar facilitating siting?</p>	<p>Brian:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County is surrounded on 3 sides by water, so anywhere within a mile or two of land sites that would be considered for solar, there is water.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First concern, then, is runoff into water.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● View is another concern. Folks in rural areas and folks on the water are not concerned for siting views, but rural area folks are more concerned.</li> <li>● Concern of loss of hunting.</li> </ul> <p>John:</p> <p>There is a flurry of development in recent years, all four counties in district are dealing with land being acquired and solar being proposed. Has one facility up and operational.</p> <p>Hopes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diversifying energy sources.</li> <li>● Jobs, although at the moment seems short-lived.</li> <li>● That VA can provide resources to local govts in decision-making process and help in understanding what long-term impacts can be.</li> </ul> <p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Environmental degradation.</li> <li>● Impacts to water quality.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <p>Currently have one project under construction, eight projects that are permitted. All are utility scale, most are 80 megawatts. One under construction is 80 megawatt, expect to be completed by June.</p> <p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fourth largest county in VA and a largely agricultural county. Concerned about available land</li> <li>● Concerned about forestry and how large scale projects taking up acres of forest might cause damage to the local Oriented Strand Board (OSB) industry.</li> <li>● Being equitable with taxes between solar sites in different locales.</li> </ul> <p>Hopes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To provide a more sustainable commonwealth.</li> </ul> <p>Daria: Scott, for completed projects, has there been any kind of larger impact on roads or emergency response, etc.?</p> <p>Scott: No, have not seen that. Staff keeping up with erosion/sediment control has been the biggest impact.</p>

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	<p>Jonet: Why are the economic impacts short lived?          John: Ultimately, once the solar sites are developed, there aren't really jobs except for a few that are needed to maintain the site. The industry thus does not happen long-term locally.</p>
<p>Question 2: In terms of equity and/or disparities in burdens and impacts of these facilities, what insights can you share with regard to your and other localities?</p>	<p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Equity in taxes</li> <li>● 80% of renewable energy is exempt from taxes. In past GA section, there is an option for county to adopt a fee.</li> <li>● Amazon has bought the power from 3 of 7 of Halifax facilities, but don't get any of the billions of investment (real estate, etc.) from their work. At best, get a 50% share of solar facility that is on their land for 30 years.</li> <li>● By year 20 of the facilities, state corporations asset it at 10% of value and only get 50-80% of that.</li> <li>● Project size also has ramifications.</li> <li>● Utility scale projects are 20-25 megawatts. Been a run of these in last several years. Community projects that are less that 5 MWs are more and more common.</li> </ul> <p>John:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rural localities are being charged with a lot of the work and aren't getting compensated for them.</li> <li>● When sites are unable to be taxed, big loss of potential revenue.</li> <li>● What one locality does upstream impacts another locality downstream. Needs to be room to coordinate efforts.</li> <li>● Owners of the land aren't always the one farming it. When a property owner decides to take cash windfall from this, the biggest loser is going to be the farmer.</li> <li>● Adjacent property owners, primarily low-income, and now generational wealth of property has been devalued because it is next to a solar facility.</li> <li>● Local governments could use support on these topics.</li> </ul> <p>Brian:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic disparity of county (high unemployment rate, etc.)</li> <li>● 30-40% of county lives below the poverty rate, and they won't benefit from high rental rates at all. If there is a problem, they will have to pay for site that failed, etc.</li> <li>● Money solar would generate would not be equitably distributed. Not a big economic incentive.</li> </ul> <p>Daria: what was impetus for BoS passing larger project knowing that economic drivers weren't there?          Brian: Solar company offered a siting agreement near one million upfront that the county needed sooner rather than later, and that was enough incentive. It's similar to a proffer arrangement.</p>
<p>Question 3: If the state</p>	<p>Brian:</p>

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<p>were to pass enabling legislation or regulations to support solar facility siting, what (if anything) would be most helpful to localities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Would have been helpful if General Assembly came up with a plan for increasing help to counties in the process.</li> <li>● Counties should not have to pay for consultant work, deeply scientific support, etc.</li> <li>● Help with siting issues and comprehensive plan issues coming from the General Assembly, etc. would be helpful.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Just need resources &amp; personnel. Erosion/sediment control is a large endeavor in county and often need assistance in that area.</li> <li>● Difficult to keep up with sites when the scale is so large.</li> <li>● Some way to blend stormwater &amp; E&amp;S together would be helpful for large-scale solar projects.</li> <li>● Storm land will be replanted with pollinators, so also considering economic factors.</li> </ul> <p>John:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These areas are in a planning deficit. Local govts. Cannot keep up.</li> <li>● Blue/green infrastructure assessment. Prioritize sites throughout the region and create a tool that local governments can use in siting processes for leverage.</li> <li>● Local governments don't have any leverage. From this deficit, there is no negotiating strength to get what to do to them when dealing with consequences, etc.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Need more room to negotiate with companies to offset loss of tax revenue, environmental impacts, and localized issues.</li> <li>○ Need guidance to do some planning to catch up. Any help they could get from state to update documents, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Need support for E&amp;S impacts. Need studying done on impacts of water quality more long-term.</li> </ul>
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**Meeting Debrief**

<p>Reflections</p>	<p>Daria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seems that main concerns discussing as a group are the real things that are happening in the field.</li> </ul> <p>Dan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Was affirming to the group that we seem to be tracking on issues.</li> <li>● Rural counties are suffering economically and that power consumers are in more affluent areas.</li> <li>● Conservation efforts go to cheap property and rural county pays for it.</li> </ul> <p>Amelia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helpful to hear the frustration particularly with regards to the county's purchase agreements and being left out of these conversations.</li> <li>● House Bill 1675 - was intent to give localities leeway of asks upfront. Interesting to see where this bill falls short.</li> </ul> <p>Michael:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnership with Weldon Cooper Center called SolSmart might be a</li> </ul>
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	<p>start towards helping the counties make the shift to solar energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SolSmart is a certification process for counties.</li> </ul> <p>Frank:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Perhaps we can get Environmental Justice included in 1) Local Comprehensive Plans and 2) As part of a decision-making tool(s) as mentioned by John Bateman.</li> </ul>
Meeting Debrief	<p>Suggestions for Next Meeting (Thursday, January 28th at 9am):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Subgroups meet to finish out the worksheets before next meeting, discuss as a whole group.</li> <li>● All put it on one sheet so all can see the updates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Add a heading to the worksheet of top 3 issues from subgroup’s perspective</li> <li>○ And, do you have any recommendations to tackle such issues.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Subgroups come up with 3-5 suggestions &amp; actionable items before next meeting.</li> <li>● Solar developer experts and having a panel with them.</li> </ul> <p>Remaining Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is status of virtual conferences for employees? At county professional org conferences, has this come up?</li> </ul>

**Meeting 3 Notes**  
**VNRLI POLICY ACTION WORKGROUP**  
**on**  
**Solar Facility Siting**  
**January 28, 2021**  
**9:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

Attendees: Kim Hodge, Concha Mendoza, Amelia Boschen, Mike Foreman, Alexandra Cook, Jonet Prevost-White, Kip Mumaw, Daria Christian, Dan Redgate, Michael Skiffington, John Ignosh, Jessica Harris, Hali Plourde-Rogers, Frank Johnson, Todd Flowers, Drew Price

**Review Last Meeting**

<p>Questions &amp; Concerns, Process, Guest Speaker, Lingering Questions</p>	<p>Question: Are recommendations from the group supposed to be made solely for the siting piece of it, or are we looking at big picture items from start to finish?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary objective of how best to site them, but secondary concerns &amp; issues that may go past siting alone. Need to consider impacts from start to finish.</li> </ul> <p>Local Govt. Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Big takeaway: Local govts. feel underprepared &amp; operating at a deficit when it comes to information &amp; decision-making</li> <li>● Urban vs. rural divide with siting being mostly on large rural sites of land &amp; operate by large companies like Amazon</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not a lot of boost to local economy with jobs in the maintenance and care of facilities</li> <li>● How can local economy benefit? Proffers? Siting agreements being more geared towards localities to have support?</li> </ul>
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**Updates for the Group**

Michael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Yesterday, the House Agriculture committee debated HB2067, a bill that would reduce the maximum size of solar projects eligible for a DEQ permit by rule from 150 megawatts to 50. It was an interesting discussion.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The bill was ultimately killed.</li> <li>○ Link for discussion is in the top of the document</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Subgroup Reports**

Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suggest implementation of GIS map of all the EJ communities across the state that would come from localities themselves.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Could look at GIS map in existence for consideration in next meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Suggest developing educational materials if localities or the state could utilize in expanding EJ work.</li> <li>● State could create a guidance guide for localities when determining how to consider EJ when siting.</li> <li>● Curate a list of questions &amp; concerns that can be standard for localities in discussions with developers.</li> <li>● Group has been discussing a 2700 acre solar farm that was approved, almost a continuous piece of land that is to serve 57,000 residents with solar energy.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project does create construction jobs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● There are other guidance documents that might be worth consideration in future endeavors.</li> </ul>
Land Ownership	No updates for the group.
Natural Resources and Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recommend a toolkit to provide to local govts, landowners, and solar developers to ensure that everyone is coming from the same knowledge base.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Templates for solar ordinances, land use agreement templates, stormwater specific policies, etc.</li> <li>○ These toolkits would represent each of these interests that are from our perspective.</li> <li>○ The state has a handbook that could serve as a model for developing this toolkit/handbook.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Erosion and Sediment controls are not as effective now, so need better ENS measures.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Need to urge the state to update these measures.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Mapping tool would be very useful, including EJ layer.</li> <li>● Ecosystem services evaluation model might also be useful for localities to have. Ex.: Rappahannock River is trying to get this</li> </ul>

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	<p>information to give to localities, etc. in their consideration. Pairs services &amp; puts dollar value on the different land uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Zoning issue came up again - the fact that much of this is larger than just agricultural.</li> <li>● Dual considerations re: development:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On the one hand, opp. for farmers to receive income from solar lease in fields that might not be performing well because of salt intrusion, but also the danger of not allowing the marsh to migrate back because of salt development.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Note: Legislation advancing in general assembly that would allow ENS to be treated like stormwater. It would budget to give DEQ extra manpower to do more efficient inspections.</li> </ul>
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**General Questions**

<p>How much time do groups have for presentation, and how do we start planning for that considering there is only one meeting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presentation will be on day two: Feb. 25th. (9:55-10:10)</li> <li>● 15 minutes to present titled “Policy Example Using Equitable Collaboration Framework.”</li> <li>● PowerPoint with few slides preferred for ease of sharing on a large meeting. No need for in-depth detail.</li> <li>● Potentially use the worksheet as a framework / outline for the presentation.</li> </ul> <p>Are there any other deliverables that we want to give aside from powerpoint?</p> <p>Useful to have a handful of people willing to take the lead on the presentation part?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Michael Skiffington,</li> </ul> <p>Potential Outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intro to the Group</li> <li>● 3 Mini Stories:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project didn’t go well (Culpepper)</li> <li>○ Project that went great (Halifax)</li> <li>○ Project in the middle (Spotsylvania)</li> <li>○ (Potentially Muddy Gut Creek)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Recommendations</li> </ul> <p>Are we supposed to show EC in our process, or just EC in the recommendations to solar siting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Could highlight elements of both, as long as EC is a focus.</li> <li>● Highlighting the background of group, the background of stakeholders consulted, etc.</li> </ul>	
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**BREAK**

**Solar Development Panel Discussion**

<p>Intros</p>	<p>Drew Price, Co-Founder &amp; Managing Director of Hexagon Energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Based in Charlottesville. 15 folks nearly all based in VA.</li> </ul> <p>Scott Foster, Gentry Lock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Represent solar developers statewide, based in Williamsburg &amp; experience in local govt.</li> </ul> <p>Todd Flowers, Business Development Manager, Dominion Energy</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Leading the regulated power generation development team.</li> </ul> <p>Rachel Smucker, Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association [MDV-SEIA]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● rachel@mdvseia.org</li> </ul>
<p>What considerations do you use when choosing a site?</p>	<p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Important to understand the timeline that it takes to develop these projects. Utility scale project → 5-7 years to get develop. Community solar projects → 2-3 years.</li> <li>● Many sites have already been selected, so need to think about how to make sites the best they can be and the best for communities, etc.</li> <li>● In terms of proximity &amp; location, project size has to match up with line size &amp; should have clear access to the grid.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Other considerations: access to sun, flatness, habitats, wetlands, cultural &amp; historical resources, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One of the biggest considerations for getting a project approved at local level is <i>project screening</i>.</li> <li>● A well-sited project will maintain buffers, and when insufficient, can supplement with additional planting. Best ordinances rely on native vegetation and support putting trees that are already in existence back on the site.</li> <li>● Solar overlays build in reality of distance from lines where projects can be located. May be an effective process moving forward.</li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limit distance to line, ideally powerline will traverse the piece of land project is on.</li> <li>● Need to pursue 1000 megawatts a year in order to meet mandate that legislators passed last year. This will happen through projects acquired, and power purchase agreements.</li> <li>● When looking at land, looking at parcels that are 500 acres or greater. Need to do this to meet mandates.</li> </ul>
<p>What gaps are out there in your knowledge and efforts towards picking sites? What tools would help you to make better decisions?</p>	<p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interconnection: A PJM process where a Q application is submitted with transmission operator is a 3 year project. Can perform injection studies and get intel on what power may be available on a specific circuit, but this is very preliminary.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Commonwealth needs to take a more holistic approach to updating the transmission system, whereas it would be more</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Wetlands: Many studies come out differently when Army Corps. does jurisdiction evaluation, and need to consider imbalances.</li> <li>● Permitting: Zoning issues might not be clearly defined, and should be reevaluated.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rural Localities: Those who see 1000 acre project coming down the pipe, might not have the needed resources to see this project to fruition. Thus, needed resources would be helpful, as would state govts. assisting in this area</li> </ul> <p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better clarity on rules would be hugely important.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Inventory is insufficient. Other databases have been used to supplement.</li> <li>● County Preferences: giving counties information proactively to assist in their thinking through how to communicate requests ahead of folks coming with recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p>How can we have/acquire better data for solar project partners and decision-makers?</p>	<p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If we had more data around impacts on soil, water quality, carbon sequestration, etc. it would be a meaningful discussion to help folks assess tradeoffs.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agree that further considerations around impact on localities and the ramifications that can come from this.</li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GIS systems are becoming very useful, but varying degrees of usefulness at the county level. Could be some improvements made to county GIS.</li> </ul>
<p>Jonet: Is there a ceiling of solar siting in the state given current limitations?</p>	<p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The current ceiling is the capacity of the grid as it stands right now with transmission lines. Most projects entering the queue now are hitting the need for big transmission upgrades. Technology may help solve this cap.</li> <li>● Biggest barriers to hitting VCA goals is local permitting.</li> <li>● Would uniformity across state be helpful?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continuing to address these issues would be helpful, as there is often some incomplete understanding on what makes a good site.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As we progress in time, there will be technological advances in trackers &amp; developing. With this new age, we will enter into parts of the commonwealth that can be repurposed &amp; used in beneficial ways.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agree, technological advances will allow for the ceiling to be expanded.</li> </ul> <p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 6-7 acres / megawatt is the approximate usage limites.</li> <li>● 30% by 2030 with all land based solar, then at 0.3% of all land in VA for some sense of scale.</li> </ul>
<p>What are biggest project “killers”?</p>	<p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interconnection can present challenges economically. Potential upgrade costs can be upwards of \$1 billion.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thinking about things in limiting or cap language can offer restrictions.</li> <li>● Impact on battlefields is also an important consideration.</li> </ul> <p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Permitting wetlands is a limiting.</li> </ul>

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<p>What things help to make projects a success?</p>	<p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have a communication &amp; EJ plan that includes community members; ensure that all stakeholders &amp; community members have transparent and open communication.</li> </ul> <p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Better data upfront is key.</li> <li>● Clear expectations for local &amp; state priorities on land.</li> <li>● Having outside consultants who can advise is also helpful.</li> </ul>
<p>What Environmental Justice considerations do you make when choosing a solar site?</p>	<p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Solar is by and large safe and doesn't have the same negative impacts that fossil fuel does.</li> <li>● Nothing in siting that drives you to communities based on race, etc. More based on transmission &amp; land.</li> <li>● Impacts rural parts of commonwealth more than urban, but not in the same way fossil fuel would.</li> </ul> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Siting is set by infrastructure. Value proposition and funds that these projects can bring to rural localities that don't have access to broadband</li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Look at demographic data early on, and if there are EJ considerations, develop data outreach plan and implement communications strategies to ensure all voices are heard.</li> <li>● Be sure that those impacted have access to the same resources that other parts of the state have so they see economic benefit.</li> </ul>
<p>Further Questions</p>	<p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When looking at siting a state, you go from a bird's eye view approach down to come up with a list of target sites and reaching out to localities, and this leads to incentive to maintain commitment.</li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pervious vs. impervious is not standard across jurisdictions, so this could be an opportunity of standardization.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Recommendations:</u></b></p> <p>Scott:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Answering question of ENS, etc. will help with land use questions.</li> </ul> <p>Todd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When we start farming the sun, start displacing other carbon facilities. Things to help process through local permitting will also be helpful.</li> <li>● Counties should have ample resources to understand economics &amp; further considerations, including the benefits of carbon-free energy.</li> </ul> <p>Drew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need to have healthy &amp; honest discussions around the benefits of removing fossil fuel facilities, as well as wildlife considerations, etc.</li> </ul>

**Meeting Debrief**

<p>Reflections</p>	<p>Takeaways &amp; Parallels:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Localities need resources &amp; support in terms of information &amp; implementation.</li> <li>● Broadband is a huge sell for localities right now.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is this part of proffer?</li> <li>○ Yes, it can be included as part of the proffers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Amelia will follow up with Katie MacCormick at Dominion about EJ guidelines &amp; documents.</i></li> </ul> <p>Does Dominion ask third party companies to follow same EJ considerations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sometimes, sites are not owned or operated by Dominion which limits some of their ability to maintain this.</li> </ul>
Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hope to develop a workplan and drill down as a group.</li> <li>● Need to finish up the worksheet.</li> <li>● Need to determine what help localities need, and what information exists now, then identify gaps &amp; further supplements that could be implemented.</li> </ul>

**Meeting 4 Notes**  
**Policy Action Workgroup Meeting #4**

February 11, 2021

Attendees: Kim Hodge, Concha Mendoza, Amelia Boschen, Mike Foreman, Alexandra Cook, Jonet Prevost-White, Daria Christian, Dan Redgate, Michael Skiffington, Jessica Harris, Hali Plourde-Rogers, Frank Johnson, Terry Lasher, Carrie Hearne

**Review Last Meeting**

Questions & Concerns, Developer Panel Review, Lingering Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good emphasis on grid discussion, but surprised by lack of emphasis on EJ.</li> <li>● The Clean Virginia mandates are important to consider in terms of large scale siting - where do we want them to go and where do we not want them to go?</li> </ul>
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**Subgroup Reports**

Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spent last Friday completing worksheet.</li> </ul>
Land Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● N/A.</li> </ul>
Natural Resources and Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● N/A.</li> </ul>

**Carrie Hearne, DMME**

- State Energy Goals: Executive Order 43
  - 30% by 2030, etc.
- Virginia Clean Economy Act
  - 16000 MW of solar mandate is driving land-use conversation.
- Land-Use Considerations for Development
  - Future land use; Agric.; Residential use; Industrial zone land; Wildlife corridors; SES; Financial Incentives; Employment; Fiscal Impacts; Visual Impacts; Transmission Line proximity; Cultural, historical, and environmental resources; Storage safety preparedness, etc.
- SolSmart Technical Assistance
  - SolSmart is a national designation program to recognize localities for encouraging solar energy growth
  - DMME & UVA offering no-cost tech assistance to localities.
  - Recent delegations: Williamsburg (Silver), Pulaski County (Gold), New River Valley (Bronze), and 8 Coalfield localities (Bronze)
  - Localities may request a consultation: [DMME \(virginia.gov\)](http://DMME.virginia.gov)
- Siting Agreements, Broadband and Solar
  - HB 1675 (2020) gives localities more power to realize community benefits via negotiating Siting Agreements for projects in Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) and QZ-eligible locations.
  - New policy enables localities to negotiate specific terms such as **Broadband** investment, enabling the locality to meet their match for state grants.
  - Read more on SoVaNow.com or connect with Robert Crockett for more.
- Local Options for Taxation and Revenue
  - New option to apply a ‘revenue share’ via local ordinance of up to \$1400 per MW per year, see HB1131 and SB762
  - Conventional options: applying either Machinery & Tools tax for 25MW and less, or Real Estate rate for projects over 25MW using SCC Depreciation schedule.
  - DMME and UVA together with stakeholders created the “SolTax” analysis tool where <https://solar-tax-webapp.herokuapp.com>
  - **SolTax Model Demo and Webinar 2/17/21 8:30am.**
- Solar Playbook for Large Scale Solar (SW VA)
  - The Solar Workgroup, the Solar Foundation, and DMME have created a playbook & introductory guide for local govts. to facilitate large-scale solar projects.
  - Part of an effort to bring solar energy and associated jobs to coalfield region.
- Current & Released Mine Permits in VA
  - Previously Disturbed Lands:
    - Abandoned Mine Lands
    - Brownfields
  - VCEA Brownfield Carve-out
  - DMME Resources, Mapping and Data
  - March 16-18 there will be a conference ([virginiasolarsummit.com](http://virginiasolarsummit.com))
- Coming Soon: Statewide Solar Survey
- The slides will be sent after the presentation, as there are appendices and helpful resources on the slides.

Questions:

- Do templates already exist in the SolSmart program?
  - Yes, this does exist. The most recent solar ordinance language is from 2012, and so

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- there is an understanding that the language is outdated. Unclear how helpful that language was.
- Recommendation is to steer away from legal language that is written in a way that a locality would adopt as is, and have more research-based, stakeholder informed language on decommissioning plans, setbacks and screening, recommendations on other next steps that can be understood by localities.
- Process should be informed by multiple stakeholders.
- Possibility for baseline recommendations, but leaving open-endedness for localities to make decisions?
  - Perhaps, lots of considerations at play for how to help VA reach energy goals.
- In terms of jobs and economic benefit, is there a benefit, in the short or long-term?
  - This varies locality by locality. Some parts of the state have not have demand on solar, so there's not much internal development, whereas others have the opposite problem.
  - SHINE program based out of Southside Community College system has a key equity focus on their work. This program is workforce development primarily, and could lead to more long-term benefits of individuals entering new fields.
- Is each community's personal statement very detailed?
  - 1-2 page letter that indicates to the SolSmart team that the community is serious and has put signature on letterhead stating commitment and sharing long-term goal.
- Benefits to counties? Can the state incentivize counties to getting SolSmart rating?
  - Ease their staff time and burdens around the process so that everyone has better information upfront.
  - Goal is to reduce time and affiliated costs that are associated with permitting solar.
  - Good to consider what benefits there might be.
- Would developers be attracted to a gold star county?
  - There could be a suite of things considered: such as tax-revenue sharing, other demonstrated values, etc.
  - Developers should see the rating as the staff being trained, educated, and prepared for the potentially long process and are ready to undertake this work.

### **BREAK**

### **Worksheets & Policy Recommendations**

#### [Worksheet Review](#)

- Make sure to spell out all acronyms in Worksheet before finalized
- Other notes sections: list of brainstorm, not necessary to include in Main document
  - Need to include landowner notes/comments in "Other notes"

#### Shared Goals:

- Clarify focus on large/utility scale solar (not community solar)
- Advocate for a creation or modification of a tool for educating localities
  - Highlight existing tools?

*All other edits were made in real time on the Google document, and questions were addressed in-meeting.*

## Appendix Five: Additional Notes and Resources

1. “SolTax” Analysis Tool: <https://solar-tax-webapp.herokuapp.com>
2. Virginia Solar Summit - March 16-18: [Virginia Solar Summit - Solar Energy, Solar Power Conference](#)
3. SHINE Program: Solar Hands-On Instructional Network of Excellence: [Solar Hands-on Instructional Network of Excellence \(SHINE\)](#)
4. Pulaski County Solar Resources: [Solar | Pulaski County, Virginia](#)
5. Gen. Assembly Discussion | ACNR Natural Resources subcommittee: <https://viriniageneralassembly.gov/house/chamber/chamberstream.php>
  - a. Scroll down to ACNR Natural Resources subcommittee for Wed Jan 27.
  - b. Advance the transcript to 8:10:30 to hear the 20 minute debate.
  - c. The link to the full committee is further up the main page and reads "Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources" starting at 1:04 pm.
  - d. Advance the transcript to 2:16:55 for the 15 minute discussion.
6. Ecosystem Serv. Model Tool: <https://naturalcapitalproject.stanford.edu/software/invest>
7. Wetland Condition Assessment Tool (WetCAT): [http://cmap2.vims.edu/WetCAT/WetCAT\\_Viewer/WetCAT\\_VA\\_2D.html#abstrShow](http://cmap2.vims.edu/WetCAT/WetCAT_Viewer/WetCAT_VA_2D.html#abstrShow)
8. LiDAR VA Resources: <https://www.vita.virginia.gov/integrated-services/vgin-geospatial-services/elevation---lidar>
9. Land Use Considerations for Large-Scale Solar - Community-based Stormwater Strategies and Vegetation Management for Sustainable Solar PV Development: [https://solsmart.org/wp-content/uploads/Solar-Land-Use\\_11192020.pdf](https://solsmart.org/wp-content/uploads/Solar-Land-Use_11192020.pdf)
  - a. (See bottom of document for siting agreement law language)
10. SolSmart Guide for localities: <https://dmme.virginia.gov/de/solsmart.shtml>
11. VACO: Virginia Association of Counties (VACO)
  - a. Utility-Scale Solar Seminar July 28, 2019 Archived Resources: <https://www.vaco.org/utility-scale-solar-seminar/>
  - b. Utility-Scale Solar Webinar June 5, 2020 Archived Resources: <https://www.vaco.org/vaco-utility-scale-solar-2020-legislative-summary-webinar/>
  - c. HB 1675 – Host Locality Site Agreement in Qualified Opportunity Zones Mapping: <http://vedp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3e058276ef7e45da99a042d5baddb83c>
  - d. More at: <https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/vceinservice121919solarfarms/home>
12. Recent article in VA Forestry Associations "Forestry Voice" from Director Corey Conners and his team as it pertains to one example of solar in rural and suburban VA, etc. - I grew up on a tobacco farm in Halifax County, VA - <https://mailchi.mp/vaforestry/vfa-voice-12-12-20?e=6e2af7548a>
13. <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2020/12/01/as-solar-farms-multiply-across-virginia-officials-reckon-with-land-use-challenges/>