



September 21, 2021

***Re: Sol Systems Supplemental Information Provided in Addition to Oral Remarks in Front of the Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee***

Dear Chairs Vogel and Schwank and Committee Members:

On behalf of Sol Systems and its over 2,500 Pennsylvania customers, we respectfully submit this supplemental information in support of expanded and responsible solar development in Pennsylvania. Specifically, Sol Systems thanks the committee for taking the step today to better understand and identify strategies that can allow Pennsylvania to remain a national energy leader and long-term net energy exporter while preserving our rich agricultural heritage.

Sol Systems is a national solar energy firm with an established reputation for integrity and reliability across its development, infrastructure, and environmental commodity businesses. To date, Sol has developed and financed over one gigawatt (GW) of solar projects valued at more than \$1 billion for Fortune 100 companies, municipalities, counties, utilities, universities, and schools and provides services to nearly 17,000 customers across the U.S. Sol Systems has customers in 57 counties across Pennsylvania and was an early pioneer of Pennsylvania's renewable energy by providing homeowners and small businesses the ability to contribute to Pennsylvania's clean energy by monetizing solar renewable energy credits (SRECs).

Renewable energy is beginning a period of remarkable growth. Bloomberg New Energy Finance estimates that the 285 corporations that belong to the RE100 could drive as much as 93 GW of incremental new wind and solar projects by 2030.<sup>1</sup> In fact, corporate demand for solar alone is estimated to exceed 50 GW by 2030.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, companies announced 11.9 GW of new projects,<sup>3</sup> representing 43 percent of all new electricity-generating capacity additions in 2020, the largest share in the industry's history and the second consecutive year that solar ranked first among all generation technologies.<sup>4</sup> Still, we estimate that to reach existing national clean energy commitments, the solar and renewable energy industry will have to at least quadruple in size. Considering that the U.S. solar energy market is valued at over \$20 billion now, there is a significant opportunity to build on the existing value of Pennsylvania's renewable energy industry and capture a great deal of growth here in the Commonwealth – if Pennsylvania maintains a stable, favorable business climate like Pennsylvania has historically provided to myriad energy sectors.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomberg NEF, January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> IHS, October 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Bloomberg NEF, January 2021.

<sup>4</sup> WoodMac, U.S. Solar Market Insight Full Report, March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion on the investment opportunities available with a favorable regulatory climate, please see our attached comments to the House Consumer Affairs Committee (August 26, 2021).



Sol Systems formally incorporates the written testimony submitted by the Solar Energy Industries Association as submitted to this committee on this issue at hand.

I. Solar is not in Conflict with Agriculture Preservation

- a. As solar continues to expand into new markets, including agricultural communities in Pennsylvania, the solar industry is actively working to minimize impacts, while advancing dual-use options and maximizing benefits to farmers and farming communities. Indeed, the basic premise that solar development conflicts with farmland preservation is incorrect and does not consider the often significant agricultural and ecological benefits solar development can bring to farms and farming communities.
- b. Increasingly, solar built on farmland or in farming communities can often result in significant steady lease revenue that in addition to maintaining the ability to farm portions of impacted land, can help mitigate market volatility, droughts, and other threats. This can help maintain generational land ownership and offer potential solutions to help counteract the recent trend in some farming communities of farms needing to be sold or otherwise monetized to remedy current or future economic hardships.

II. Construction Practices can Support Long-term Land Preservation and Management

- a. Responsible solar development can help improve soil health, reduce erosion, sequester emissions, and provide lower-cost energy to local communities and farmers.<sup>6</sup>
- b. As compared to other energy generation projects and installations, most utility scale solar development does not involve large-scale removal of topsoil, allowing the land to return to agricultural production at the end of a project's life.
- c. A few examples of positive land use construction processes are low- or zero-waste construction coupled with other ecological installations like the construction of pollinator habits and rotational crops and grazing to help minimize drought and erosion.
- d. Additionally, most of the waste from solar project construction is the wood pallets used to ship solar panels and cardboard boxes to package them along with other electrical equipment, both of which are readily reusable and recyclable which is different from many other energy generation assets and new capacity being built in Pennsylvania and other states.

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<sup>6</sup> NREL: Overview of Opportunities for Co-Location of Solar Energy Technology and Vegetation.



III. All-of-the-above Solar Strategy Supports Farmland Preservation

- a. Supporting needed levels of clean electricity and electrification while maintaining – or preferably growing – Pennsylvania’s energy exporter status requires a stable, supportive, and clear policy framework that supports all forms of clean energy, including the full spectrum of solar, from utility-scale to distributed generation.
- b. Utilizing the full spectrum of solar – including distributed generation, currently under-supported in Pennsylvania would allow Pennsylvania to grow the clean energy needed to support demand and diversify opportunities for Pennsylvania to remain an energy leader.

In conclusion, we thank the committee for the opportunity to offer testimony and look forward to helping to identify strategies that can allow Pennsylvania to remain a national energy leader and long-term net energy exporter while preserving our rich agricultural heritage. Ensuring long-term opportunities for farmers and farm communities, employing leading construction methods, and supporting all forms of solar energy that complement a variety of land uses is essential to growing Pennsylvania’s as a renewable energy leader.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Williams  
Vice President, Policy & External Affairs  
Sol Systems