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Adam Braillard - Where are the Mass. net metering regulations headed?

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The bolstered interest in renewable energy in Massachusetts is due, in large part, to the transformation of net metering regulations over the past 30 years (see "The History of Net Metering in Massachusetts" in last month's issue, <http://nerej.com/46578>).

To be considered for net metering, a facility, in part, must enter into a utility's net metering tariff and interconnection process (aka the queue). However, utilities cannot provide assurance of the eligibility of a net metering facility until it is operational.

The Massachusetts Legislature recognized the risk posed by assuring eligibility only upon a facility being operational, and the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) has requested straw proposals from stakeholders suggesting criteria and mechanics to be utilized to provide assurance of net metering eligibility prior to development completion.

The DPU anticipates that the net metering regulations will be amended in 2011 to provide for such assurance. According to the straw proposals and discussions held during DPU technical sessions, amendments to the net metering regulations will likely focus on: 1) improving the tracking and reporting by the utilities of net metering facility interconnection applications, and 2) depending upon the class of net metering facility and customer type, increasing criteria for entering into the utility's net metering queue and utilizing timelines for the completion of projects once in the queue.

By so doing, the DPU will provide greater certainty that once projects are in the queue, assuming that they are timely completed, they will be assured of eligibility.

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