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Mass. continues support and expansion of solar development in the state

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Shakespeare once said, "Men shut their doors against a setting sun."

Fortunately for property owners and solar developers in Massachusetts, the sun has not set on their chance to assure the state remains a leader in the development of alternative energy projects.

In a special hearing held on June 7th, officials at the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) announced something many in the solar industry had hoped they would hear - continued support and expansion of solar development in the State.

Last spring, as the state inched closer to its goal - set by governor Deval Patrick - of developing 400 megawatts of solar power, developers became concerned that projects currently under development but not within the 400 MW cap would be left out to dry.

That, fortunately, turned out not to be the case.

In a clear gesture continued support for further development of solar energy, the DOER announced two important, overarching goals: 1) Increasing, through emergency regulations, the original cap to include qualified projects under what is known as the SREC I program; and 2) The creation of an SREC II program intends to modify the current structure and by increasing the state's goal to 1600 MW of solar energy by 2020.

The announcement was met with a round of applause from the many solar developers in attendance.

Thanks to a significant increase in solar development under SREC I over the past three years, the number of installed or accepted projects had reached roughly 679 MW as of July 12, putting the overall SREC II goal at roughly 921 MW.

Unlike its current instantiation, the new SREC II program is designed to champion smaller, behind-the-meter projects, as opposed to the large "solar farms" that have lately cropped up throughout the state. The hope being that SREC II will further support building owners looking to directly offset their own energy costs with an array tied directly to the property.

What does this mean for property owners? By increasing the targets and guaranteeing the efficacy of projects launched under existing program, property owners will have continued incentive to pursue projects and initiatives that can both bolster the bottom line and reduce their carbon footprint.

While the DOER stated that new draft regulations are expected by the end of the year, there's never been a better time to explore what a system on your property might look like.

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