

Getting Ready for Solar Power

CHANCES ARE A BIG SOLAR PROJECT HAS been proposed somewhere near you. In the past six months, industrial-scale solar proposals have popped up in Augusta, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Page counties. These projects, covering hundreds of acres, generate electricity that feeds directly into the grid and is purchased by utilities.

The idea of low emissions solar energy in the Shenandoah Valley sounds pretty good to many of us, especially after facing proposals for fracking in Rockingham in 2011 and now a natural gas pipeline slated to cut through Augusta.

However, like any big development project, industrial-scale solar proposals must be carefully sited to avoid unintended impacts.

Siting and scale are key

First, localities ought to establish clear standards for siting industrial-scale projects. Permitting guidelines should consider both the appropriateness of a site as well as any requirements for upgraded transmission infrastructure. Local ordinances and comprehensive plans must be considered to better understand if the project is compatible with future vision for that area.



Impacts to local communities — including agriculture, scenic and historic resources and risks to water quality — must be carefully considered in siting decisions. Questions could include: “Are there brownfields or previously developed or degraded lands that could be priority lands for siting?” and “Are

there compatible agricultural uses which could co-exist with these types of projects?”

Thoughtful solar projects include erosion and sediment control and stormwater management as well as plans to mini-

mimize the spread of invasive plants. Finally, such proposals should always include provisions to restore the land at the end of a project’s life span — usually in 25 to 30 years.

Are incentives for solar driving the right projects in Virginia?

Solar installations fall into two categories: industrial-scale solar where the power is fed directly into the grid (sometimes called utility-scale), and distributed solar where the energy is used on the home, farm, business or school



GREETING GUESTS AT TASTE OF SHENANDOAH

Randy Phillips (Cave Ridge owner-operator and host), Kate Wofford (Alliance Executive Director), and John Adamson (Shenandoah Advisory Council).
Photo credit: Dennis Atwood

Thanks to our wonderful vendors, Cave Ridge and everyone who joined us for a fun day of tastings and pairings. Hope to see you next year!

where it is generated (sometimes called behind-the-meter).

Virginia law is favorable to industrial-scale solar projects, but it imposes barriers that slow down customers’ access to solar power on homes, businesses, farms and schools.

In the coming months, the Alliance will be working with communities to encourage sensible guidelines for siting industrial-scale projects, and working with our state legislators to find ways to break down barriers to local, small-scale energy.

Find more information and links to resources at **ShenandoahAlliance.org**.

A Pipeline in Search of a Market

Who would have guessed, back in July of 2014 when Dominion Energy first announced its intention to build the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, that today we’d be writing a newsletter article about its uncertain future? Well, here we are. And, as Augusta Coordinator Nancy Sorrells has said from day one, this pipeline is not a done deal.

In our region, a lot of public attention has been paid to the risks the pipeline poses to water sources and Dominion’s unfair use of eminent domain. Less attention has been paid to the need for the project, or rather, the lack of need.

The truth is Dominion’s justification for building the \$6 billion project has steadily eroded over the past four years. The large majority (79 percent) of the pipeline’s capacity is slated to serve new power plants, and Dominion claims that demand for energy is growing. In reality, demand for new energy is flat and that means we don’t need new power plants in Virginia. Independent analyses show that there is sufficient capacity in existing gas pipelines to meet demand long into the future.

But the permitting agencies haven’t looked closely at whether the pipeline is needed. Instead, they have chosen to rely on Dominion’s customer contracts to demonstrate that there is market demand for the natural gas. The problem is that Dominion is both the pipeline developer and the pipeline customer, so the purchase agreements are with its own subsidiaries. It has contracted with itself to show market demand for the project and gain permit approvals.



At the end of the day, the ACP is a great business decision for Dominion with its guaranteed 15 percent rate of return. But it leaves Dominion’s customers to foot the bill (up to \$2.5 billion) for expensive, unneeded new infrastructure.

The pipeline’s impacts on our land, water and communities will be severe. For our region to bear this burden, without a demonstrated need for the energy, is too much to ask.

With your help, we will continue to push back against this damaging project. For more information and how to help, go to **ShenandoahAlliance.org**.



Vision for a Strong Future



Dear Friends,

With your guidance and support, we are beginning an exciting new chapter for land and water conservation in the Shenandoah Valley. We heard from you, long-time supporters of our legacy

groups, that we must make sure our work can continue. In response, we took action to create a new organization, an Alliance that ensures a strong future.

It's hard for me to imagine a more committed and community-minded board of directors helping to lead this new organization. In our first newsletter, hear from them in their own words why they are dedicated to this conservation venture.

Over the past several months, the board and staff came together to set our course by refining our mission and creating strategic conservation goals. It's a bold vision for the future of our region—*A Shenandoah Valley where our way of life is sustained by rural landscapes, clean streams and rivers, and thriving communities*—and one we can only achieve working hand-in-hand with our local conservation partners and supporters like you.

Thank you for believing in the future of the Valley—its family farms, healthy waters, historic towns, public forestlands, and wonderful people. And thank you for joining us to make sure the extraordinary Valley resources we enjoy today will be here for future generations.

Alliance Executive Director

Introducing the Alliance Board of Directors

The Alliance is led by a talented and engaged volunteer board of directors, with deep community connections throughout the service area, generating strong program priorities and ambitious organizational goals.

We invite you to learn more about our board of directors, and hear, in their own words, why they decided to get involved in the Alliance.



CHRISTINE ANDREE (WARREN)

Christine is a writer and artist living in Warren County where she and her architect husband hand-built their house and raised their two sons. She is a founding director of the Scenic 340 Project, Inc., an environmental group that has permanently protected 1,700 acres for a wildlife corridor connecting the Shenandoah National Park to the George Washington National Forest.

"Over the past two decades, Scenic 340 Project has worked with elected officials, our neighbors, and the broader community to conserve our local resources. I want to ensure the continuation of our work in Warren and Page, as well as place-based conservation efforts throughout the Shenandoah Valley."



CHRIS BOIES (SHENANDOAH)

A life-long resident of the Shenandoah Valley, Chris is currently the vice president of Financial and Administrative Services for Lord Fairfax Community College. Prior, he was Shenandoah County director of planning and zoning and town manager of New Market. Active in several local community and civic groups, including the Strasburg Rotary and Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce, Chris lives with his wife and three daughters west of Strasburg.

"By supporting responsible growth and development, we can protect what makes us want to stay here and build on what makes our region unique. If we succeed, future generations can choose—like I did—to call the Valley home."



SETH COFFMAN (SHENANDOAH)

Seth is a native of Shenandoah County and currently works as the Programs Manager for Trout Unlimited's Shenandoah Headwaters and Upper James Home Rivers Initiatives. Seth served on the Shenandoah Forum Board of Directors starting in 2009, including a 4-year stint as chair. He lives in Quicksburg with his wife Liza and their two children.

"Shenandoah Forum's work has made a positive difference in our county for 17 years. This merger ensures that we can continue our substantial efforts in Shenandoah County communities. When asked to join the new Alliance board, Teddy Roosevelt's famous quote about the rewards of having the chance to 'work hard at work worth doing' came to mind, and I gladly accepted the offer."

ALLIANCE STAFF



ERIN BURCH
Outreach
Coordinator



KIM SANDUM
Rockingham
Coordinator and
Transportation Lead



NANCY SORRELLS
Augusta
Coordinator



KIM WOODWELL
Program Director
and Shenandoah
Coordinator



JOAN COMANOR (SHENANDOAH)

Since moving to the Valley in 1990, Joan has brought the knowledge and expertise of a career in conservation to benefit many local organizations including the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District, Woodstock Enhancement Committee, Woodstock Tree Board and the agroforestry and water resources advisory committees for Shenandoah County. Currently the chair for the Alliance Board of Directors, she spent the past six years as a board member of Shenandoah Forum.

"It's important we continue to build on the work we have already done. To do that, we need to keep our long-time supporters involved and gain new supporters by successfully addressing concerns and opportunities from across our six county region."



SARAH FRANCISCO (AUGUSTA)

Sarah's passion for protecting the forests and farms of the Shenandoah Valley comes naturally, as she grew up on a working farm in Augusta County and currently lives in Waynesboro. A senior attorney, Sarah joined the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) more than 15 years ago. She is now the Virginia office director, leading SELC's legal and policy work throughout the state.

"I have had the chance to work with conservation groups across the southeast. I believe the Alliance will be an effective model—and a necessary force—to protect the resources valued by local communities throughout the Valley over the long term."



LEE GOOD (ROCKINGHAM)

Having grown up in Pennsylvania on a dairy farm in Lancaster County, Lee now lives with his family on a small farm near Harrisonburg where they raise beef cows, goats, pigs and laying hens. A former board member of the Community Alliance for Preservation (CAP) in Rockingham, he teaches science at Eastern Mennonite School.

"Maintaining our agricultural heritage is important. CAP's work in Rockingham was effective and worth continuing. I am eager to continue to be involved and do my part to see that our working farmland and agricultural way of life continue."



CORY GULLIAMS (ROCKINGHAM)

Originally from Botetourt County, Cory transplanted to the Shenandoah Valley 13 years ago to work as a conservationist with the Harrisonburg USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office. He lives with his wife and two young children in Keezletown but frequently returns to Botetourt County to lend a hand on a beef cattle farm owned by a family friend, where he has worked for over 20 years.

"The culture and heritage of the Valley were pivotal in my family's decision to make this our new home. I want to ensure we continue to uphold the quality of life I have experienced here."



LISA ANNE HAWKINS (ROCKINGHAM)

Lisa is an owner of Lenhart Pettit PC and practices law out of its offices in Harrisonburg and Charlottesville. Her practice focuses on commercial real estate and financing transactions with a special interest and expertise in representing landowners and land trusts regarding conservation easements and nutrient banking. Lisa is a founding board member of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance.

"When I was in high school in Prince William County, I once missed curfew because there were cows blocking the road home. That land is now a sea of houses and retail with no cows anywhere. I believe the new Alliance has potential to make lasting impacts ensuring the Shenandoah Valley doesn't change like that."



JOHN HUTCHINSON (FRIEND AND ADVISOR)

John has engaged in fundraising, development and policy research related to land conservation and battlefield preservation in Virginia and nationally for more than 32 years. John has directed land acquisition and conservation programs at the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, the lead managing partner for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, since 2001. He has protected thousands

of acres on the ten Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley through donation, bargain sale and fee purchase.

"Building capacity for Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley greatly benefits our region but also makes great strides in achieving the Foundation's congressionally-mandated mission to protect our natural and cultural resources."



JOE LEHNEN (SHENANDOAH)

Joe moved to Shenandoah County in 1983 to serve as an area forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry. Outside of work, Joe is very active in the community, including as a former board member for Shenandoah Forum, member of the board of directors of the Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy, president of the Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum for 5 years, member of the Land Management committee for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, active member of St. Paul's UCC church and member of the Woodstock Tree Board.

"I was pleased to stay involved when the Forum became part of Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley. I think we can make a difference not only preserving what we have but enhancing it for our children."



ROBERT (BOBBY) WHITESCARVER (AUGUSTA)

Bobby is a watershed restoration scientist, farmer, award-winning writer and educator. Retired from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service with 31 years of field experience, he is president of Whitescarver Natural Resources Management LLC, an environmental consulting firm. He and his wife run a commercial cow calf operation in Swoope, Virginia. Bobby teaches natural resource management at James Madison

University and is a freelance writer.

"People all over the world have heard about the beauty and culture of the Shenandoah Valley. It is up to all of us to protect the land and water resources that make this place extraordinary."

Although the legacy organizations have now merged into a single entity, their important work continues as part of the Alliance's mission and we remain committed to maintaining the close community connections these organizations have made. Most board members are still involved, either on the new Alliance board or on local county-based Advisory Councils.

Shenandoah Advisory Council

John Adamson Dennis Atwood
Alan Hawkins Randy Phillips

Rockingham Advisory Council

Bethany Fairfield JC Huber
Tim Jost George Rohrer

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ALLIANCE
FOR THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY
*Conserving our Land, Water,
and Way of Life*



JOIN US THE MORNING OF

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1

Shenandoah Valley Watch Party General Assembly Preview

In preparation for Virginia's upcoming General Assembly session, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley is partnering with Virginia Conservation Network (vcnva.org) to host a 2019 legislative session preview watch party in Harrisonburg. Join conservation leaders and community members to learn how we can advance our shared conservation priorities.

Stay for the whole morning or drop in for the issues that interest you the most (clean water, land use and transportation, clean energy).

Coffee and light breakfast will be served. All attendees will receive a copy of the 2019 VCN Environmental Briefing Book.

See ShenandoahAlliance.org for details and to register.

INTERSTATE 81 CORRIDOR STUDY Tolls Now Proposed on Trucks AND Cars



VDOT's work continues, with one new twist: they now include a proposal to toll ALL vehicles, not just heavy trucks as previously proposed.

Over the past several months, the agency has

reviewed congestion and safety issues and prioritized potential improvements that focus on three different areas:

- Corridor Operations Plan to better manage incidents.
- Site-specific Capital Improvements.
- Potential Funding Options include tolls on all vehicles, a regional fuels tax, and regional retail sales and use taxes.

Thanks to everyone who has already sent in your public comment. And remember, there is still time for you to weigh in. Deadline for comments is November 30.

See ShenandoahAlliance.org to learn more about the study, our policy recommendation, and how to submit your comments.