

Evaluation Tool for Proper Siting of Larger Scale Solar Projects

(Created by Bobby Whitescarver and Nancy Sorrells July 1, 2021)

Section I General Project Description:

- Name of Project
- Name of Applicant (Developer)
- Description of project in general (acreage, number of tracts, megawatts for the project). How much total land and how much land under panels?
- How many acres that will be under PV panel. Will these be broken up into individual pods? If so, what are the pod sizes?
- How many acres of the project will be placed into buffers, setbacks, and screening? Describe the composition of the buffers (trees, species, etc.) and the widths (do the widths meet or exceed the locality ordinance?)
- Please describe the type of panels (such as fixed or tracking, height, etc.).

Section 2 Location:

- List the specific planning policy areas as denoted in the locality's comprehensive plan where this project will be located. If there are multiple planning policy areas, denote how many acres will be in each policy area.
- What is the underlying zoning on each parcel in the project area and what is the current land use on each parcel?
- Description of tracts of land and location (include acreage, total parcels, map, and other necessary information)
- Will this project be partially or wholly placed on a grey or brown field or co-located with existing urban uses such as rooftops and paved parking areas?
- Is the site currently under active agricultural use? If so, describe what use (cropland, pasture, grazing, timber, etc.)
- If the land is being farmed, what are the soil types?

Does the site have more than 25% prime farmland soil (Class I and II)?

Does the site have 70% or more soil that is marginal farmland (Class III or higher)?

- Describe the topography and orientation (compass) of the land.
- Describe the extent of the grading required for development of the site?
- Describe the surrounding communities (i.e. compact residential communities, rural residential with large lots, business and commercial, industrial, schools or other facilities, etc.)
- Are there historic or cultural resources that could be impacted by this project, such as battlefields, historic structures, or archaeological resources?
If the answer is yes, list those resources, describe the impact, and what the project will do to avoid or mitigate that impact.

- Are there wetlands or watercourses on the site? If the answer is yes, describe how these will be avoided and protected.
- Will there be large tracts of timber that will be cut? If so, describe those tracts.
- What is the project's proximity to electrical transmission lines and how does the project plan to connect to those?

Section 4 Environmental & Agricultural

- Do the Erosion and Sediment Control and Stormwater Management plans meet the state and locality's minimum standards or do they exceed those standards? If they exceed, please describe how that occurs and describe whether or not that stormwater infrastructure will remain in place after construction.
- Will the project be certified as Virginia Pollinator Smart?
- How does the project protect or enhance wildlife habitat and corridors?
- Describe how top soil will be handled, segregated during construction and how and where it will be reapplied after construction. Include in this description the areas that will be under panel as well as construction roads.
- How will the solar array be designed to ensure that rainwater naturally infiltrates the ground beneath the panels?
- Describe the operation and maintenance plan for maintaining and improving the soil health over the life of the project. (This includes any application of soil enhancements, maintenance of vegetative cover, monitoring of soil health, etc.)
- Address how the project will mitigate soil compaction issues during construction and operation of the project.
- Will any portion of the project include complementary agriculture (such as apiaries, livestock grazing, etc.)?
- Would the developer commit to hiring a person who monitors water quality and manages the agricultural aspects of the project for the life of the project?

Section 5: Economic & Community impacts

- Describe the economic impacts to the local government and the community created by this project.
- Describe how the project will include participation and input from the community in the plan development.

Section 5: Decommissioning

- Describe the project's decommissioning plan.
- When the project is decommissioned at the end of its life, what is the intended use for the land?