

West River Valley

100% Renewable

Overview of Small Solar Projects in the West River Valley

- West River Valley 100% Renewable ([WRV100](#)) is a cooperative effort of seven towns aimed at using only energy sources that are renewable by 2025.
- Key to their efforts is creating small solar installations in cleared fields near power lines. The area for development will be under 1 acre to avoid stormwater permits that are triggered once a project exceeds 1 acre.
- WRV100 has an agreement with an investor to develop small sites in the next two years that will each produce a minimum of 100 kWh of power.
- Using an initial list of sites identified using GIS mapping, volunteers from WRV100 and town Energy Committees will locate the best sites, with help from Green Mountain Power.
- The investor will pay the landowner for the use of the field with an agreement that lasts approximately 20 years. Electricity generated by these projects will go into the electrical grid, thus increasing the amount of electricity generated locally using solar energy.
- For Vermonters who have open land, this is a great deal. Small farmers and others who are hurting financially can be paid to “grow” solar power on their fields. It costs them nothing.
- The WRV100 pilot project, located on Old Cheney Road in the town of Windham, is awaiting final approval by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Legislative Help Needed

- The PUC process for the pilot project has been arduous and expensive. It has been nearly five months since that application was submitted. The permitter works in several other states, and he says Vermont's permitting process is by far the most tedious and restrictive.

Request: Use legislative authority to speed the PUC's permitting process, including easing some Act 250 requirements.

- Green Mountain Power requires that the investor and developer bare the entire cost of transmitting power from a solar field to GMP, including new wires, new poles, and other upgrades which can be very expensive.

Request: Use legislative authority to make funding available for transmission upgrades. ARPA funds for broadband can be refocused to include solar line capacity, as both types of lines are on the same utility poles.

- As learned recently in Manchester, a good solar site can be rejected if there are any public concerns about its location and visibility.

Request: Use legislative authority to allocate funding to increase public awareness about the urgent need to decarbonize, in order to wean Vermont's economy and residents off of fossil fuels and significantly increase renewable energy generation capacity. Again, ARPA funds can be refocused for this purpose.

Thank you for your leadership on this crucial issue!