

No. 163. An act relating to miscellaneous energy subjects.

(H.676)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 248(s) is amended to read:

(s) This subsection sets minimum setback requirements that shall apply to in-state ground-mounted solar electric generation facilities approved under this section, unless the facility is installed on a canopy constructed on an area primarily used for parking vehicles that is in existence or permitted on the date the application for the facility is filed.

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(3) On review of an application, the Commission may:

(A) require a larger setback than this subsection requires; ~~or~~

(B) approve an agreement to a smaller setback among the applicant, the municipal legislative body, and each owner of property adjoining the smaller setback; or

(C) require a setback for a facility constructed on an area primarily used for parking vehicles, if the application concerns such a facility.

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Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 248b is amended to read:

§ 248b. FEES; AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES; PARTICIPATION
IN SITING PROCEEDINGS

(a) Establishment. This section establishes fees for the purpose of supporting the role of the Agency of Natural Resources (the Agency) in reviewing applications for in-state facilities under sections 248 and 248a of this title.

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(d) Electric and natural gas facilities. This subsection sets fees for applications under section 248 of this title.

(1) There shall be no fee for an electric generation facility less than or equal to ~~139~~ 50 kW in plant capacity, for roof-mounted photovoltaic systems of any capacity up to and including 500 kW, or for an application filed under subsection 248(k), (l), or (n) of this title.

(2) The fee for electric generation facilities greater than ~~139~~ 50 kW through five MW in plant capacity shall be calculated as follows, except that in no event shall the fee exceed \$15,000.00:

(A) An electric generation facility from 51 kW through 139 kW in plant capacity, \$2.00 per kW.

(B) An electric generation facility from 140 kW through 450 kW in plant capacity, \$3.00 per kW.

~~(B)~~(C) An electric generation facility from 451 kW through 2.2 MW in plant capacity, \$4.00 per kW.

~~(C)~~(D) An electric generation facility from 2.201 MW through five MW in plant capacity, \$5.00 per kW.

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Sec. 3. 6 V.S.A. chapter 217 is added to read:

CHAPTER 217. POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY SOLAR GENERATION

STANDARD

§ 5101. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Agency” means the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

(2) “Invasive species” means any species of vegetation that:

(A) is designated as a noxious weed on the Agency’s Noxious Weed

Rule under chapter 84 of this title;

(B) is listed on the Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant Committee

Watch List;

(C) has been quarantined by the Agency as invasive; or

(D) has been determined to be invasive by the Agency of Natural

Resources.

(3) “Native” refers to perennial vegetation that is native to Vermont.

Native perennial vegetation does not include invasive species.

(4) “Naturalized” refers to perennial vegetation that is not native to Vermont, but is now considered to be well established and part of Vermont flora. Naturalized perennial vegetation does not include invasive species.

(5) “Owner” means a public or private entity that has a controlling interest in the solar site.

(6) “Perennial vegetation” means wildflowers, forbs, shrubs, sedges, rushes, and grasses that serve as habitat, forage, and migratory way stations for pollinators.

(7) “Pollinator” means bees, birds, bats, and other insects or wildlife that pollinate flowering plants, and includes wild and managed insects.

(8) “Solar site” means a ground-mounted solar system for generating electricity and the area surrounding that system under the control of the owner.

(9) “Vegetation management plan” means a written document that includes short- and long-term site management practices that will provide and maintain native and naturalized perennial vegetation.

§ 5102. BENEFICIAL HABITAT STANDARD

(a) This section establishes a standard for owners that intend to claim that, through the voluntary planting and management of vegetation, a solar site provides greater benefits to pollinators and shrub-dependent birds than are provided by solar sites not so managed.

(b) In order for the solar site to meet the beneficial habitat standard and for the owner of a solar site to claim that the solar site is beneficial to those species or is pollinator-friendly, all the following shall apply:

(1) The owner adheres to guidance set forth by the Pollinator-Friendly Scorecard (Scorecard) published by the University of Vermont (UVM) Extension.

(2) The owner shall make the solar site's completed Scorecard available to the public and provide a copy of the completed Scorecard to the UVM Extension.

(3) If the site has a vegetation management plan:

(A) The plan shall maximize the use of native and naturalized perennial vegetation for foraging habitat beneficial to pollinators consistent with the solar site's Scorecard.

(B) The owner shall make the vegetation management plan available to the public and provide a copy of the plan to the UVM Extension.

(4) When establishing perennial vegetation and beneficial foraging habitat, the solar site shall use native and naturalized plant species and seed mixes whenever practicable.

(c) Nothing in this chapter affects any findings that must be made in order to issue a State permit or other approval for a solar site or the duty to comply with any conditions in such a permit or approval.

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Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.

Date Governor signed bill: May 22, 2018