

Introduction

Eversource Energy has identified parcel(s) of land currently owned in Montague, MA, and believed to be suitable for development of approximately 6.15 Megawatt (MW) of solar photovoltaic electric generating facility. The following narrative and documentation is hereby submitted to the Planning Board under Section 8 of the Montague Zoning Bylaws for site plan review application and under Section 5.2.6(c) for consideration for Special Permit.

Eversource Energy
Pre-Application Project Narrative
±6.15 MW (DC) Solar Photovoltaic Project
Millers Falls Road
Montague, MA 01748
Parcel 28-0-1, 24-0-23,
24-0-24, and 24-0-25

Eversource Energy proposes to construct, own, and operate approximately 6.15 MW (DC) of a fixed-tilt, solar photovoltaic distributed energy generation project on four of its parcels located along the south side of Millers Falls Road in Montague, MA. The parcels are currently undeveloped. There is an existing powerline easement bordering the south side of the project and a water line easement bordering the west side of the project. A gravel driveway on Lake Pleasant Road shall provide access to the solar array.

Background

Electric service in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is composed of two components: (1) supply service, which is the electricity commodity that we use to power our homes and businesses, and (2) delivery service, which is the transport of electricity from the source of its generation to our homes and businesses. Eversource Energy is New England's largest energy delivery service provider, serving more than 3.6 million electric and natural gas customers in CT, MA and NH.

Eversource Energy provides delivery services through a network of transmission and distribution poles and wires throughout its service territories. In Massachusetts the electric service territory includes 140 towns covering 3,192 square miles. The Company operates more than 4,270 circuit miles of transmission lines, 72,000 pole miles of distribution lines, 578 substations, 449,737 distribution transformers and 6,459 miles of natural gas distribution pipelines across our service territory¹.

Eversource has filed a petition with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities for approval to construction 62 MW of solar energy throughout the Commonwealth, in part, to produce Renewable Energy Credits ("RECs") from the solar facilities to meet Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") compliance obligations associated with its Basic Service load.

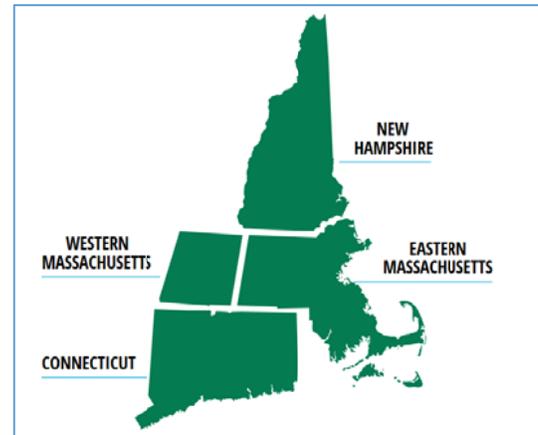


Figure 1 Eversource Service Area

The proposed solar facility would be considered a small distributed generation asset under Independent System Operator-New England (ISO-NE) operating rules and is considered accessory use to its main business purpose of distributing electricity. In its filing with DPU, Eversource has presented a business case where it believes it can leverage the current favorable market conditions to procure solar PV at competitive pricing, and to own and operate these assets long term to meet its RPS obligations. Eversource has also represented to the DPU that it has intended to utilize property it already owns or leases to minimize the programmatic cost to ratepayers, to the extent possible, by not having to purchase or lease additional land. The proposed solar program is consistent with the requirements for rate recovery, as set forth in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 164, §1A(f).

¹ (Source: <https://www.eversource.com>)

Proposed Project

The proposed project would cover 22.7 acres within the fenced solar photovoltaic development area. The total area of the four parcels to be developed is 51.5 acres. Approximately 25 acres shall be cleared for the proposed development. This area is the minimum necessary for development of the solar array and the associated areas to prevent shading (from east, west, south directions). The array would be set a fixed tilt of 35 degrees oriented at an azimuth of 225 degrees to optimize solar production and reduce glare for incoming aircraft traveling to the Turners Falls Airport. The array area would be enclosed within an eight foot tall chain link fence and a 15-foot wide gravel access road will provide access around the perimeter and from Lake Pleasant Road for both routine maintenance and fire department apparatus in the event of an emergency. A bar gate located near Lake Pleasant Road shall provide additional security against unwanted vehicle access to the solar facility as well as to the powerline easement.

The project will not require any regrading. A 200' wide strip of wooded area (approximately 8.6 acres) located between the solar PV development and Millers Falls Road shall remain undisturbed in order to maintain natural screening from the public from Millers Falls Road and provide some added security to the project.

The project includes five small (17 x 27 feet) concrete electrical equipment pads totaling only 2,295 square feet total of added impervious area. The gravel access road and panels themselves are not considered impervious.

The attached plan set depicts existing conditions as well as proposed conditions: access roads, solar array and equipment, location of interconnection, limits of clearing and fencing, and erosion and sedimentation control measures. The project will require minimal project-related signage mounted to proposed fencing. The attached stormwater analysis and report, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Stormwater Management Standards as further elaborated by the Massachusetts Stormwater Handbook, indicates that the proposed project shall not result in a net increase in the peak rate of runoff, and shall be in compliance with state standards for long-term pollution prevention, and construction period erosion and sedimentation control.

There will be no lighting, occupancy, water, septic or other wastewater, other waste disposal facilities or services required with this plan, other than cellular data service for remote communications with the system.

We look forward to your review of this project and welcome any questions or comments that the Planning Board or others in Montague may have about the project.