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How the Smart Solar Siting Scorecard Influences Solar Project Siting in New York

The NYSERDA Smart Solar Siting Scorecard is a key tool shaping how and where solar projects are developed in New York State. Its influence is both direct and indirect, affecting project design, siting decisions, and the overall balance between renewable energy goals and land preservation.

Key Ways the Scorecard Influences Siting:

- **Guidance for Developers:** The Scorecard provides clear criteria and strategies for developers to consider when selecting sites, designing projects, and planning operations, maintenance, and decommissioning. These criteria emphasize minimizing impacts on prime farmland, forested areas, and other sensitive resources[1] [2] [3] [4].
- **Project Evaluation and Incentives:** Projects that avoid or minimize use of high-value agricultural or forested land receive higher rankings or scores. This incentivizes developers to prioritize less sensitive sites and to integrate practices such as dual-use (agrivoltaics), soil quality enhancement, and continued agricultural operations[5] [4] [6].
- **Required Submission:** All large-scale solar project proposals submitted to NYSERDA must include a completed Scorecard. While the Scorecard itself may not always be used directly in proposal scoring, it is mandatory and provides NYSERDA with detailed information on how each project addresses siting considerations[3] [4].
- **Policy Alignment:** The Scorecard helps align solar development with New York State's broader environmental, agricultural, and climate objectives. It encourages a balanced approach that supports both clean energy expansion and the protection of vital farmland and ecosystems[1] [5] [3] [4].
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The Scorecard is regularly refined based on input from the Agricultural Technical Working Group (A-TWG) and other stakeholders, ensuring it reflects evolving best practices and community concerns[5].

Summary Table:

Influence Area	How the Scorecard Impacts Siting
Site Selection	Encourages avoidance/minimization of prime farmland and sensitive lands
Project Design	Promotes dual-use, soil health, and continued agricultural activities
Proposal Evaluation	Higher scores for projects with lower land-use impacts
Policy Compliance	Ensures alignment with NY agricultural and climate goals
Stakeholder Input	Ongoing updates reflect diverse perspectives and best practices

Conclusion:
The Smart Solar Siting Scorecard is a central mechanism for steering solar development toward

sites and practices that minimize negative impacts on agriculture and the environment, while supporting New York's clean energy targets[1] [5] [2] [4].

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1. https://portal.nyserda.ny.gov/CORE_Solicitation_Document_Page?documentId=a0l8z000000xul1
2. https://portal.nyserda.ny.gov/CORE_Solicitation_Document_Page?documentId=a0l8z0000015WHp
3. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60a2bb02f009ad6b9f6a15f9/t/61b235dcb121812b6b8ef122/1639069148720/RESRFP21-1+Smart+Solar+Siting+Scorecard_Final.pdf
4. https://cobleskill.edu/institute/pdf/ag-solutions-fair-24-files/NYSERDA - Agricultural Policies and Initiatives for Large-Scale Solar Facilities.pdf
5. https://www.cbi.org/case/siting-solar-energy-in-new-york-state/
6. https://solargrazing.org/asga-call-57-replay-nyserdas-new-dual-use-strategies/