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Lt. Gov. Austin Davis and Acting DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley Highlight Potential of Solar Power on Pennsylvania's Abandoned Mine Lands to Create Jobs and Cut Costs

Shapiro Administration showcases new solar farm by Four Twelve Renewables which will partner with Dollar Energy Fund to help local low-income families reduce their utility bills.

Nearly 169,000 acres of abandoned mine lands across the Commonwealth could potentially host similar solar facilities.

Georgetown, PA – Lt. Gov. Austin Davis and Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Jessica Shirley today touted the potential economic and environmental benefits of building solar facilities on abandoned mine lands in Pennsylvania at a news conference at a newly operational solar farm in Beaver County.

The new solar site, owned by Four Twelve Renewables, will partner with the Dollar Energy Fund to ensure proceeds from the site go towards helping to lower utility bills in low-income communities. Dollar Energy Fund helps to lower utility costs by providing grants to those who have nowhere else to turn because they are not eligible for government assistance, providing direct assistance to prevent termination and to restore service, and partnering with community-based agencies to provide additional resources that may benefit low-income households.

“So many communities, such as those here in Beaver County, or my hometown of McKeesport and all across southwestern and northeastern Pennsylvania, bear the scars of our state’s mining and industrial past,” said **Lt. Gov. Davis**. “As the steel plants or coal mines closed, those communities have often struggled to compete in the new economy, and local residents live in the shadow of brownfields or abandoned mine lands that can cause pollution. As we see more opportunities for investment in solar projects, Pennsylvania should be strategic about promoting sites that can be remediated and put to good use, generating clean energy, creating new jobs and providing additional tax revenues for local municipalities. The report we’re releasing makes clear that former coal communities are assets and poised to be big winners as we transition to a clean energy economy.”

DEP today released a new report, “[Assessment of Solar Development on Previously Impacted Mine Lands in Pennsylvania](#),” which found nearly 169,000 acres of abandoned mine lands across the Commonwealth that could potentially host solar facilities. That includes 27,000 reclaimed and 142,000 unreclaimed acres.

“Pennsylvania has tremendous potential for solar energy on abandoned mine lands. Our report shows that putting solar panels on just a small fraction of the suitable abandoned mine lands could produce enough electricity to power Pittsburgh,” said **Acting Secretary Shirley**. “We can clean up these sites, put them back into use with solar energy, and create jobs all at the same time.”

The report makes a number of recommendations, including establishing a goal of 9,000 acres (or 1,500 megawatts) of solar facilities on previously mined sites by 2032. That would equal approximately 5 percent of the 169,000 acres that are potentially suitable for solar. It also represents about 14 percent of the 11,000 megawatts needed to increase to reach the Pennsylvania’s Solar Future Plan goal of generating 10 percent of the state’s electricity needs by 2030.

Reaching that 10 percent target would help to create an estimated 60,000 jobs. While the number of solar facilities in Pennsylvania is growing, the state currently ranks 24th in the nation for installed solar power capacity.

“We have an amazing opportunity here to rejuvenate these otherwise unused spaces by harnessing the power of the sun to provide clean, affordable energy and benefit local communities, said **Paul Atencio, a board member of Four Twelve Renewables**, owner of the BE Pine solar facility in Greene Township, where the Shapiro-Davis Administration made today’s announcement. “This site specifically will go a step further using the site’s generated funds to provide utility assistance to local neighbors in need through Dollar Energy Fund.”

“We are immensely proud of our partnership with Dollar Energy Fund, which has been instrumental in our ongoing efforts to ensure no resident of Beaver County has to choose between essential needs,” said **Zabriawn Smith, executive director of Housing Opportunities, Inc.**

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