

POSITION STATEMENT
NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Wind and Solar Power Installations on Forest Land

The Situation

Landowners actions can affect, both negatively and positively, adjoining ownerships and local communities. With current concerns about climate change and the demand for renewable energy sources, it is vital that the woods and forests across the State be used in accord with landowners wishes but also in the best interest of maintaining a strong economy and healthy environment.

Landowners in all areas are subject to a multitude of pressures to convert open spaces, be it farm or forest or a patch of woods and brush, to some other use; from housing developments, commercial uses, highways or transmission easements, and more recently, to wind or solar power development. Information must be provided on all possible forest uses from production of carbon-neutral biomass for energy production to sustainable timber production, wildlife habitat, water aquifers, and electric power production from wind and solar power. For forestland in New York state a big issue with any land use is the proverbial question, *“How can I best financially manage my land for the good of my family, our community and the environment?”* A related issue is, *“How much of my land will be devoted to this energy production, 5%,20%,50% or what; compared to what I may lose in forest-related values?”* Some other uses might be compatible with large scale installation of solar panels or wind turbines, depending on the particular circumstances of individual properties. Where lands are being abandoned for farming, production of solar or wind power may offer landowners income to enable them to continue owning their land and contribute to the betterment of a rural community.

Our Position

NYFOA recognizes the demand for multiple sources of renewable energy and supports a comprehensive long-range plan to maintain healthy and productive forests and open-space lands while providing all New Yorkers with a high quality of living and a strong economy tied to abundant, reliable energy. We support the development and circulation of information about land capability and possibilities to all landowners and other citizens of the State regarding wind and solar energy installations. Landowners should be informed about possible multiple-uses of land devoted to wind and solar, limitations on land uses and possible encumbrances on future property sale, and future liability for the clean-up and remediation of the site if no longer used for wind or solar power.

There are sites across New York that are not part of active farms or productive forest land that could be devoted to energy production. NYFOA encourages local governments and utility companies to actively pursue locations for wind and solar power such as building roofs, abandoned landfills, old quarries, and offshore locations. Sites for both wind and solar should be close to existing transmission lines to avoid further fragmentation of forest lands. Any proposal for converting farm or forest land to energy production should be accompanied by rigorous examination of alternatives, buffering of facilities boundaries with tree cover, opportunities for limited livestock pasturage or forest products such as Christmas Trees etc.

New York Forests

Forests and open spaces cover almost 65% of New York State (19 million acres). Over 200,000 private owners hold 75% of the state's forests. An additional 500,000 private owners have small wooded parcels ranging from 1-10 acres. All wooded areas contribute greatly to the economy and healthy environment of New York and provide essential needs such as wood products, food supplies, wildlife habitat, watershed retention values, carbon sequestration, and more. The forests across New York are also essential to creating a renewable carbon-neutral energy supply through biofuel production, and a welcome natural area free from the bustle of urban living. The future of our woods and forests rests largely with the private owners who sustainably manage these forests while bringing the many forest values to all New Yorkers. Each year, New York forests produce \$10 billion of wood products, provide safe water supply for 16 million people, support an outdoor recreation economy of \$3.8 billion, contain essential wildlife habitat, biodiversity and vital oxygen-producing and carbon sink areas to ameliorate climate change.

The New York Forest Owners Association

The New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) promotes sustainable forestry practices and enhanced stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. Through local chapter and statewide activities such as woods walks and tours, the bi-monthly *New York Forest Owner* magazine, and cooperation with similar organizations, NYFOA helps woodland owners achieve sustainable management objectives and heightened appreciation of the unique qualities and importance of New York's forests.

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