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LD 856

Support Balanced Solar Development in Maine

MFT supports renewable energy production on farms as long as it does not significantly diminish the potential for agricultural production. On-site energy production can provide economic support to a farm, reduce the farm's energy costs, and is important for addressing climate change. But making sure we have the land base to support a robust local and regional food system – and food security in Maine – is also critical. Solar development in the state should not result in the loss of important agricultural soils, displace agricultural production, or impede the ability of farmers to access the land they need for their agricultural operations. Solar generation and agriculture can co-exist symbiotically in Maine as long as solar siting is structured to balance these important interests.

LD 856 as amended would advance key recommendations from the Agricultural Solar Siting Stakeholder Group that incentivize the siting of solar energy projects that minimize impacts to important agricultural resources. These recommendations would:

Ensure that agricultural stakeholders are involved in siting work sessions to make sure that impacts to important agricultural and natural resources are considered, and that well-sited projects, including solar development on lands with significant PFAS contamination, are prioritized and supported in renewable energy programs;

Support the development and research of dual-use solar projects by reserving at least 20 MW of capacity for a dual-use pilot program focused on the integration of solar projects with different types of agricultural production systems;

Create a centralized database of information, including agricultural impact trends, related to approved and constructed renewable energy projects; and

Provide more technical assistance to municipalities as they work to evaluate solar projects.