

On Jan 25, 2021, at 7:21 PM, Mark Kresowik wrote:

To: Caroline Taylor, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Ms. Taylor, thank you very much for your service on the Montgomery County Solar Work Group, for your hard work on behalf of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, and for sharing your thoughts on solar siting best practices with us. Please find attached and below a policy clarification and request from the Sierra Club to remove references to our policy from your website.

We agree on many things, including the need for publicizing information about optimal solar siting locations across Maryland and directing incentives for developers to utilize those sites. However, as a duly authorized representative of the Sierra Club's Board of Directors for implementing clean energy policy in the Eastern Region of the United States, I must ask you to remove any references to the Sierra Club's supposed policy positions from your website. Unfortunately your public misinterpretations of our policy have greatly confused a number of people and contributed to the spread of misinformation.

The Sierra Club supports Montgomery County Zoning Text Amendment 20-01 (ZTA 20-01). Our position, as determined through Sierra Club's democratically-driven processes and consistent with current policies enacted by the Board of Directors regarding [energy resources](#) and [siting of renewable energy on public lands](#), has been shared with [our members](#) and [decision-makers](#), as well as in the [Washington Post](#). Passing ZTA 20-01 is a responsible, thoughtfully considered approach to following through on Montgomery County's climate protection commitments while creating jobs, bringing in much-needed revenue, and continuing the traditions of environmentally-responsible agriculture. The Sierra Club absolutely does support study and dissemination of information about the best locations and best practices for solar development, but we also support appropriate siting of solar projects now. Our climate, our health, and our economy cannot afford to wait.

On your website, which you have shared with us and others, you cite an outdated Sierra Club policy from 1978 regarding energy facilities siting. That policy has since been explicitly superseded and clarified by the Sierra Club's elected Board of Directors when it enacted and updated our Energy Resource Policy and Guidelines on Transmission and Large Scale Renewable Energy Production on Public Lands linked above, due to the development of new clean energy resources and the urgency of climate protection.

The Sierra Club's processes to implement our policies are in place to prevent precisely the kind of misinformation you are unfortunately responsible for spreading, and as a valued partner we must ask you to cease in those harmful efforts by removing those references from your website. While we can certainly understand where the confusion comes from, as our past policies remain on our own website, the importance of sharing truthful information with the public and decision-makers has only been underscored for all of us over the last four years.

We would be delighted to discuss mutual support from the County and State for opportunities to further direct solar development to the most optimal sites after the hopeful passage of ZTA 20-01, as we have with other partners throughout this process. We do believe both levels of government can and should do more to provide incentives for such responsible development, but that should not preclude solar development by right in certain areas that are not critical habitat for endangered or threatened species.

Sincerely,

Mark Kresowik  
Deputy Regional Director, Eastern Region  
Beyond Coal Campaign

Sierra Club

From: **Caroline Taylor**

Date: Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 8:51 PM

Subject: Re: Clarification of Sierra Club Policy on Solar Siting in regards to Montgomery County

To: Mark Kresowik

Mark,

Thanks for reaching out. Reviewed your email and the links provided.

I took note of the following link you provided:

[https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/Energy-Resources-policy\\_0.pdf](https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/Energy-Resources-policy_0.pdf)

It reads on page 13:

*"Many opportunities exist in and adjacent to our communities for the local, smaller-scale application of renewable technologies (such as rooftop solar). Distributed clean energy involves the entire community in energy solutions, and reduces transmission impacts and disruptive transmission bottlenecks. The Sierra Club supports properly sited and designed local and district energy projects, and calls for measures to ensure that local, smaller-scale projects have access to the transmission and distribution system. Because distributed generation generally takes place in an urban or otherwise developed environment, serious siting problems or unacceptable environmental impacts are uncommon."*

I have attached this document with several other relevant provisions highlighted. We will certainly add that to our web post. Perhaps we can remove the dated national policy that was accessed on the current website, and simply substitute what you have provided, while retaining current information cited below. I understand that the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has sent their siting guidelines (also provided on our post) directly to Councilmembers.

The information disseminated from Sierra Club MD website indicates that ZTA 20-01, as written, does not provide for appropriate siting of commercial solar facilities in Montgomery County's master planned Agricultural and Open Space Reserve. We shared portions of the linked side presentation entitled "Solar development generating guidelines for appropriate locations" downloadable at [www.sierraclub.org/maryland/solar-energy](http://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/solar-energy).

We specifically call out items from what makes good local solar policy: (page 30):

- "Supports, promotes, and maximizes economically feasible use of rooftop solar, accessory solar, 'retired' landfills and brownfields, and appropriate public lands"
- "Assures adequate, timely public notification and input"
- This point is expanded: "It should include requirements of solar developers for adequate and timely notification of residents - those near a proposed project site, as well as the community at large. This requirement should include an adequate public hearing as part of the review process."
- "Defines what land should not be used ... favoring 'marginal' land over prime productive (USDA Class I-III) land"

By these metrics, ZTA 20-01 without amending to designate commercial solar facilities in AR zone as Conditional Use and provide for appropriate protection of Class II soils, will not lead to suitable siting of solar projects.

Steady,

C

Caroline Taylor, Executive Director  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
P.O. Box 24, Poolesville, Maryland 20837  
301-461-9831  
<http://mocoalliance.org/>

"Whether we and our politicians know it or not, Nature is party to all our deals and designs, and she has more votes, a larger memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do." ~Wendell Berry