

Maine

Solar Policy Survey

October 2016



The NESEMC Solar Policy Survey compiles information on state-level policies that significantly influence the solar energy market. The survey was produced with the help of the Pace Energy and Climate Center’s team of student researchers. The vast majority of the information contained within this document has been obtained from [the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency](#) (DSIRE) with additional information and research obtained from various sources.

Note: These factsheets are updated periodically to reflect policy changes within each state. If you notice a mistake or out of date information, please contact Nick Martin at nmartin@nesemc.com.

SOLAR MARKET POLICIES

This document surveys the following solar market relevant policies.

POLICY	DESCRIPTION
RENEWABLE ENERGY GOALS	Does the state have enforceable and/or non-mandatory renewable energy goals? Do these goals include a specific solar PV carve out?
SOLAR TARIFFS AND RATES	How are solar PV customers impacted by utility tariffs and rates? Does the state offer net metering and/or value of solar tariffs? Do utilities impose high fixed charges or specific charges on solar customers?
VIRTUAL NET METERING	Can solar PV customers offset electricity purchases on multiple meters?
COMMUNITY AND SHARED SOLAR	Can multiple customers offset their electricity purchases from a single PV system?
GREEN FINANCING	Does the state support renewable energy financing through institutions like green banks or property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing?
PERMITTING	Has the state streamlined the solar PV permitting process?
LICENSING	What type of licensing is required to install solar PV systems? Are specialized solar PV or renewable energy licenses available?
SOLAR RIGHTS AND ACCESS	Does the state protect customers’ ability to install solar PV systems and access sunlight?
OTHER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES	Does the state offer financial incentives including grants, loans, tax credits, and/or tax exemptions?

RENEWABLE ENERGY GOALS

Goals and Mandates:

Maine state law creates a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) requiring 40% of retail electricity sales to be supplied by renewable sources by 2017.¹

10% of the 2017 RPS mandate must be fulfilled by Class I renewable sources, which include solar PV. These resources must have come online after September 1st, 2005. The increasing yearly requirements of the RPS is primarily fulfilled by increases in Class I renewable sources.

Solar Carve Out:

Maine does not have a solar specific renewable energy goal or solar carve out in the RPS.

SOLAR TARIFFS AND RATES

NET METERING

Maine state law mandates net metering for solar PV customers.²

Maximum System Capacity:

For customers of investor-owned utilities, net metered facilities may be up to 660kW per facility. For customers of municipal or cooperative utilities, net metered facilities may be up to 100kW per facility, although these utilities may voluntarily offer up to 660kW.

Aggregate Capacity Limit:

There is not a specified cap on net metering facilities. However, utilities must notify the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) if the capacity of net metered facilities reaches 1% of their peak demand.

Applicable Entities:

All utilities must offer net metering.

Excess Generation:

Excess generation is credited to the customer's next monthly bill at the retail rate. Excess generation is granted to the utility at the end of 12-month billing cycle with no compensation to the customer.

Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) Ownership:

REC ownership is not addressed by net metering rules.

NOTE: The Maine Public Utilities Commission is currently considering revisions to the state's net metering provisions in [Docket No. 2016-00222](#) – Public Utilities Commission Amendments to Net Energy Billing Rule (Chapter 313).

¹ 35-A M.R.S. § 3210

² CMR 65-407-313

VALUE OF SOLAR

Maine's utilities do not offer any value of solar tariffs. The Maine PUC recently conducted a [study](#) on the value of distributed solar energy generation. The study found a 25 year levelized value of \$0.337/kWh.

VIRTUAL NET METERING

Maine allows virtual net metering under its existing net metering program for investor-owned utilities. Cooperative and municipal utilities may offer it voluntarily.

Maximum System Capacity:

Virtually net metered facilities may be up to 660kW per facility, which are the same limits that apply to net metered facilities .

Aggregate Capacity Limit:

Virtually net metered facilities are included under the net metering program's aggregate capacity limit. There is not a specified cap on these facilities. However, utilities must notify the Maine PUC if the capacity of net metered facilities reaches 1% of peak demand.

Compensation Rules:

Beneficial accounts are credited the same as under the net metering program.

Limitations:

A maximum of 10 accounts may be credited, and the owners of the benefiting accounts must all hold an ownership stake in the eligible facility.

COMMUNITY AND SHARED SOLAR

Through Maine's provisions for virtual net metering, certain shared solar configurations are allowable for customers of investor-owned utilities.

Enrollment / Program Size Limits:

Up to 10 participants are allowed to receive credit from a single eligible facility.

Shared solar facilities are included under net metering single facility capacity limits of 660kW for IOU customers and 100kW for muni and co-op customers.

Shared solar facilities are also included under the aggregate capacity limit whereby utilities must notify the PUC if the cumulative capacity of net metered facilities reaches 1% of peak demand.

Compensation Rules:

Credits are applied at the retail rate towards participants bills based on the ownership interest of the eligible facility.

Other Limitations:

Participants in Maine's shared renewables policy must acquire an actual ownership stake in the generating facility; leasing or temporary subscriptions are not permitted.

GREEN FINANCING

Green Bank:

Maine does not currently have an operational green bank or similar institution/program that uses public funds to leverage private investment in solar PV.

PACE Financing:

Authorized by state law, local governments may establish PACE financing programs. [Efficiency Maine](#) has developed a [model PACE ordinance and other materials](#) for local governments, and it maintains a [list of municipalities](#) that offer PACE financing.

PERMITTING

Standardization:

Maine does not have a statewide standard application or fee for obtaining necessary permits for solar PV projects.

Guidance:

State specific permitting guidance documents were not found for Maine.

LICENSING

Maine does not offer solar PV specific licenses for installers. All or most aspects of a PV installation must be done by a state licensed electrician.

Tied to Incentives:

Rebate incentives are only available for projects installed by a Master Electrician who is certified by NABCEP or is working in conjunction with someone certified by NABCEP.

Reciprocity:

Maine reciprocates with MA, NH, OR, and VT for journeyman and master electrician licenses.³

³ [National Electrical Contractors Association](#)

SOLAR RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Solar Rights:

State law prohibits municipal ordinances, bylaws, and regulations from unreasonably impeding the installation or use of solar energy devices on residential property. Municipalities may restrict the installation and use of solar devices to protect public health and safety, prevent building damage, preserve historic/aesthetic values, and protect shorelines so long as the restriction is reasonable.⁴

State law prohibits homeowner association (HOA) rules, bylaws, and regulations from impeding the installation or use of solar energy devices.⁵

Legal instruments that define the limits, rights, or privileges of owners and renters of condominiums and residential property in common ownership with third parties (e.g. apartment complexes where residents own individual units) may restrict the use of solar energy devices in the condominium's common areas and on common-ownership properties.⁶

Solar Access:

State law explicitly allows for voluntary creation of easements for access to direct sunlight.⁷

OTHER FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Other state-level direct financial and tax incentives were not found for Maine.

⁴ 33 M.R.S. 28-A § 1423

⁵ 33 M.R.S. 28-A § 1423

⁶ 33 M.R.S. 28-A § 1423

⁷ 33 M.R.S. 28 § 1401

About NESEMC



The **Northeast Solar Energy Market Coalition** brings together solar energy business associations and other stakeholders in the Northeast United States to harmonize regional solar energy policy and advance the solar energy market. We are funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative as a cooperative agreement through 2017.

Our vision is a thriving, efficient regional market for solar photovoltaic energy generation in the Northeast.

We will realize our vision by encouraging and engaging regional solar businesses in advancing market policy to lower costs and increase solar market opportunity. We will educate stakeholders and policy makers throughout the region directly, and by empowering our member organizations with robust analysis and timely information.

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