

Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors Alternative Energy Position Statement

Introduction

The Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors supports the research, development, and application of alternative energy sources preceded by a thorough New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process. The Board defines **alternative energy sources** as geothermal, wind, solar, and hydroelectric generation.

Large-Scale Alternative Energy Systems

The Board recognizes the variability in definitions of “large” or utility-scale wind and solar energy systems. For the purposes of this statement, the Board defines large-scale wind energy projects as those that have an output greater than one-megawatt of energy, and large scale solar energy projects as those that have an alternating current (AC) power output of greater than two-megawatts of energy.

SEQRA Review

We recommend that municipalities audit their land-use regulations to make sure they are fully capable of protecting the public’s health, safety and general welfare as it relates to alternative energy development. The Board recognizes that local Planning Board experts may have varying levels of expertise regarding SEQRA review. Therefore, the Board recommends that all Planning Boards avail themselves of SEQRA training as part of their continuing education requirements. The Board defines a thorough SEQRA review in the context of alternative energy projects as follows:

1. A review which complies with the provisions of 6NYCRR Part 617 as written and interpreted by relevant case law;
2. A review which encompasses the environmental risks associated with a particular project through a thorough scoping process;
3. A review which is conducted in a transparent manner, allows for ample public engagement, and is based on empirical, well substantiated evidence;
4. A review whose records are stored in an accessible fashion in both online and hardcopy formats; and
5. A review that appropriately considers, evaluates, and addresses input from members of the public, local and county officials, and other interested parties.

OCCA Board of Directors Alternative Energy Resolution

Whereas Americans use vast amounts of energy for daily living and the use of fossil fuels to meet our energy needs requires continual investment in a dwindling, non-renewable, energy supply and;

Whereas with the exit of the United States from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord, it is the responsibility of State, County, and local governments to mitigate and adapt to the effects of global climate change and;

Whereas New York State has taken a leadership role in the fight against climate change through the adoption of the Clean Energy Standard, being a signatory in the United States Climate Alliance, and through the gradual enactment of the Reforming the Energy Vision Initiative and;

Whereas communities in New York are receiving an uptick in the number of applications for large-scale renewable energy installations in their boundaries and must be prepared to accommodate them within their boundaries and;

Whereas New York State will need to be aggressive in the construction and installation of renewable energy systems throughout the state in order to meet established emissions reductions targets and;

Whereas alternative energy projects represent a significant job creation opportunity which can facilitate sustainable economic growth in New York State and;

Whereas the Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors recognizes large-scale installations of solar and wind energy as a suitable use of land in Otsego County pending a thorough SEQRA review, public engagement, data analysis, and siting process and;

Whereas the Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors supports the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Smart Communities Program and;

Whereas the Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors defines alternative energy as energy that comes from natural, renewable sources, such as geothermal, wind, solar and hydro, and does not exhaust natural resources or harm the environment.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Otsego County Conservation Association Board of Directors supports the following alternative energy strategies based on the most up-to-date research.

- Geothermal in all applications.
- Wind in all applications. It is understood that wind installations will be properly sited, remediation will be implemented to reduce bird and bat kills, light flicker for nearby residents, noise, habitat fragmentation, and avoidance of bird flyways, with extensive environmental monitoring of individual turbine sites, pre- and post-construction monitoring, and with input from local officials, state and national agencies, and wind companies.
- Photovoltaic, concentrated solar power (CSP), and solar thermal energy applications in all sizes, either for creating electricity or heating water.
- Hydroelectric power in small-scale applications when properly sited with proper protection for fish and aquatic organisms.
- Biomass in small scale residential uses if shown to be safe and efficient.
- Any other alternative energy projects would be considered after thorough review.

