

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 1, 2018



**CONTACT:**

Austin Davis

Renewable Energy Vermont

austin@revermont.org

802-229-0099

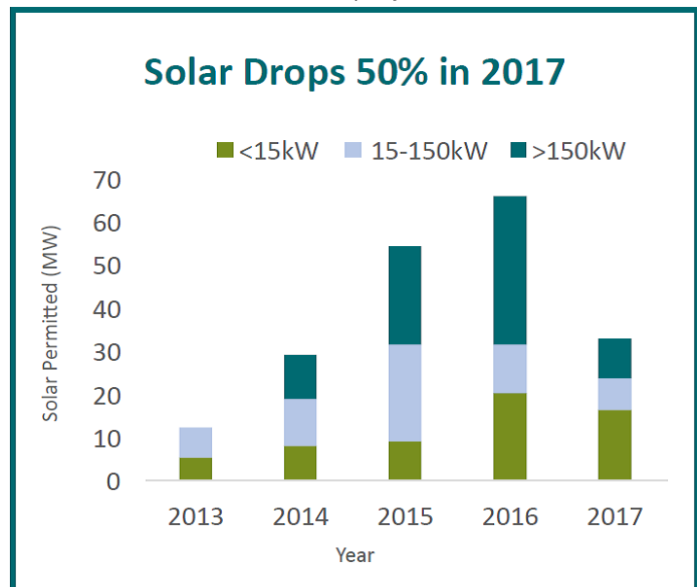
@re\_vermont

## Solar Program Changes Shrink Economic Opportunity in Vermont

Residents of the Green Mountain State are committed to self-reliance and clean energy, however, a keystone program enabling Vermonters to generate their own renewable energy and keep their dollars local has languished, resulting in lost economic opportunity.

Net metering allows Vermonters the freedom to generate their own renewable energy while also supporting their friends, neighbors, and communities. Following a major overhaul to the program in January 2017, Vermont is seeing a dramatic decline in new net metered solar projects.

Recent analysis of solar permit data collected by the Vermont Public Utilities Commission shows a dramatic 50% decline in new local net metered solar projects last year. The revised net metering rules drastically stalled the pace of customer solar projects, to levels last seen in 2014. Notably, lower cost, more efficiently-scaled, larger community solar projects for schools, towns, and local businesses saw a 73% drop in the amount of capacity (kilowatts) that were permitted, while mid-sized and residential projects also significantly slowed.



“We are at a crossroads where we need to make decisions as to the type of Vermont we want to embrace,” said Dan Kinney of Randolph-based Catamount Solar. “Understand that a dollar towards local energy generation is a dollar that lifts all boats, or decide to be a dependent consumer of foreign energy.”

While the Vermont solar tradesmen and women are resilient, shrinking volume leads to fewer local jobs, lost local benefits, and less economic investment. Adding to these challenges, the price of solar panels is set to increase by up to 30% in 2018 due to a new federal tariff imposed by President Trump.

“Unfortunately the last year has seen unprecedented changes on the local and national level with new Vermont Net Metering rules and a significant federal solar tariff. We are working hard to address these challenges to ensure that we continue to best serve our customers and employees,” said Upper-Valley-based Joel Stettenheim of Norwich Technologies. “Minimizing future disruptions while building on past successes is the path forward for Vermont to continue to provide needed leadership in our collective efforts to address the real and immediate dangers of climate change.”

Recently Governor Phil Scott praised the solar trades during his budget address to the Vermont General Assembly as an economic development success story to be emulated. This is undeniable as the clean energy sector has outpaced the Vermont economy over the past four years. Looking towards the future, the [Vermont Solar Pathways study](#), supported by U.S. Department of Energy, found that if Vermont generated just 20% of our electricity from solar, we would create \$8 Billion in net benefits for Vermonters.

“Vermonters should have the right to produce local, clean energy for themselves – and any further drop in the state’s solar rates will jeopardize that,” said Waitsfield-based Nils Behn of Aegis Renewables. “We should be working hard to keep every energy dollar we can in Vermont, not cutting those jobs in favor of out of state or foreign energy.”

Lower cost, efficiently-scaled, community scaled, or shared solar capacity arrays slowed the most in the last year, which affects the many Vermont homes and businesses who cannot host solar onsite due to renting, historic roofs, or shading. These projects are also soon to be most affected by the Trump administration’s solar tariff.

“Derailing local solar that enables Vermonters to save on their bills, combat climate change, and create well-paying trade jobs, is the wrong direction for our state,” said Olivia Campbell Andersen, Executive Director of Renewable Energy Vermont. “Now is the time to support Vermonters who are doing their part to shoulder more of the state’s energy burden by generating local energy.”

**For Media Planning Purposes:**

*In person interviews regarding the above content are available at the following locations the day of Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>.*

Dan Kinney, Catamount Solar | available at the Vermont Farm Show | phone: 802-728-4601 email: [dan@catamountsolar.com](mailto:dan@catamountsolar.com)

Joel Stettenheim, Norwich Technologies | available at White River Junction office | phone: 802-384 – 1333 email: [stettenheim@norwitech.com](mailto:stettenheim@norwitech.com)

Nils Behn, Aegis Renewable Energy | available at Waitsfield Office | phone: 802-496-5155 email: [nbehn@aegis-re.com](mailto:nbehn@aegis-re.com)

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### **About Renewable Energy Vermont**

Renewable Energy Vermont represents businesses, non-profits, utilities, and individuals committed to reducing our reliance on dirty fossil fuels by increasing clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency in Vermont. Vermont's clean energy economy directly enables at least 19,080 jobs at 3,751 businesses, representing approximately 6% of Vermont's workforce. Together, we will achieve 90% total renewable energy (electric, thermal, transportation) before 2050. Learn more at [www.revermont.org](http://www.revermont.org).