

## Turkey Mountain Solar Garden

**Overview:** Turkey Mountain Solar Garden is designed to generate electricity on a small area of land. It has the added advantages of protecting the visual beauty of the landscape, maintaining wildlife activity, providing financial advantages for the property owners, and giving other electricity consumers a way to support renewable energy.

**Turkey Mountain Solar Garden** – Unlike large installations with row after row of solar panels, the Turkey Mountain Solar Garden involves only two acres of land, with panels on only one acre. Located on the Simonds/McCoy property at 1275 Old Cheney Road, it will include the following: (1) an edible landscape for wildlife, including berry bushes, fruit trees, and ground vegetation; (2) wildlife corridors that run north and south and east and west through the installation, as well as corridors that encircle it; (3) birdhouses; (4) no fences; (5) sitting areas for human visitors to enjoy the mountain views; and (6) possible sculptures.

**Model Project** – It is anticipated that the Turkey Mountain Solar Garden will be the first of similar solar projects in our town and region. Although others may not have the “garden” concept, they will be similar in outcome. Not only will they address climate change by producing renewable energy, they will offer income for property owners who have more land than money. By putting a solar field on their unused land, they will receive financial advantages.

In the case of Turkey Mountain Solar Garden, reimbursement is being provided for the site’s preparation, and some of the energy produced will be dedicated to the land’s owners, who can use it or sell it as they choose. Their energy will equal 10% of the total panels. The land owners will have no out-of-pocket cost and 20 years of free electricity. Furthermore, when the grid goes down, the owners will still have power.

Vermonters who choose to support this or other solar fields but do not own land they want to use in this fashion can become “off-takers.” That means they can invest in the installation, own a portion of the energy output, and receive a reduction in their electric bills. Turkey Mt. Solar Garden will produce 150 KW. That’s enough to power the homes or businesses of 30 to 40 off-takers. Anyone who is a customer of Green Mountain Power is eligible to be an off-taker.

Turkey Mt. Solar Garden will generate support for additional similar projects. Promotion efforts can include: (1) open viewing for any visitor; (2) an annual potluck for the off-takers; (3) tours of the Simonds/McCoy all-electric home; (4) a website with details on the project.

**Partners** – This project involves support which has been committed from the federal government (through tax credits), the West River Valley 100% Renewable Project, the Windham Energy Committee, Richard Turnure (financial investor), Jonathan Nelson (developer), and Carter McCann (designer). Support from the Windham Regional Commission is also anticipated. Green Mountain Power has been involved in the approval process for production.

**Big Picture** – Richard, the financial backer, has signed an agreement with West River Valley 100% Renewable Project for the group to identify locations and promote the development of solar installations in our region. This local group is committed to making our region be powered totally by renewable sources by the year 2025. Ongoing support from the federal, state and local governments is expected to increase as climate change makes the need for renewable energy even more apparent.

It is our hope that Windham can help lead the way by supporting the model project. We ask the Windham Selectboard for your official approval and support. To other residents we say: If you have an appropriate solar site, you can help yourself, you can help your town, you can help your planet, and it doesn’t cost you a dime. Some will say we are dreamers, but we’re not the only ones!