

# SUPPORT HB206

Topic: Small renewable energy projects; impact on natural resources

Bill Patron: M. Webert

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## Reasons to support HB206:

- The legislation establishes reasonable standards within the solar Permit By Rule (PBR) process, recognizing the importance of forests and farmland and requiring mitigation when significant impacts occur. Mitigation is not limited to onsite and could be met through a variety of means.
- Poorly-sited projects are leading to local pushback based on the loss of, or impacts to, farmland and forests. Commonsense measures on mitigation and avoidance would address some of the concerns raised by local communities.
- Typical construction techniques for utility-scale solar include severe compaction of soils, hampering reversion back to productive agricultural lands and forests at the end of a project's useful life.
- The bill also requires VDEQ to include recommendations related to mitigation as part of the agency's environmental report for projects before the State Corporation Commission.

## Overview:

Rising demand for green energy sources has spurred interest in the development of utility-scale solar facilities. These facilities are often located in rural areas and consume numerous acres (many well over 1000 acres in size). This creates conflicts with natural, cultural, and historic resources when poorly sited. The vast majority of these facilities are permitted through the Permit By Rule (PBR) process administered by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ). There are currently no standards for mitigation related to farmland and forests, both critical for climate resiliency.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.