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A Closer Look: Solar Recycling - Part 2

By [Brian Bouchard](#)

Published: Jul. 8, 2022 at 5:24 PM EDT | Updated: 16 hours ago



PRESQUE ISLE, Maine (WAGM) -

The state of Maine has set renewable energy requirements for the state to receive 80% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. In the second part of our series regarding Solar Panels, Brian Bouchard looks at an effort to establish Solar panel recycling in Maine.

"I don't know if you're aware of recycling across the country of solar panels but most of them are being burned"

Beth O'Connor is the soon to be retired Representative for Maine House District 5 in Berwick. After seeing a flood of solar projects being proposed, along with the Governors goals of going green O'Connor looked into and proposed a bill revolving around a component of Solar Panels that isn't exactly environmentally friendly, recycling.

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"I knew we were having a solar boom, I knew what was going on, so I said we have to do something about this in advance and this bill basically would have opened up a stewardship program"

The bill, which is based on a law enacted in Washington state would have established policy and procedures regarding the recycling of solar panels in Maine. According to the EPA and the Solar Energy Industries Association, there are currently no Solar recycling programs established in New England, and the Northeast Recycling Council states that solar panels are classified as general waste, and estimate that by 2030 the united states would generate 170,000 tons of solar panel waste annually.

"I think Maine has seen a robust interest in renewable energy development particularly solar development over the last 2 and a half years in Maine. We're seeing approximately 150 to almost 200 projects a year over the last two years."

Nick Livesay is the Director of the Bureau of Land Resources for the Department of Environmental Protection. He says the recycling of solar panels is an issue for the future.

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"We're certainly not anywhere near the stage of projects being decommissioned, meaning reaching the end of their useful life. I think that recycling is something that most solar developers are anticipating being part of standard operating procedure when projects reach the end of their useful life, that's 30 years or so down the road from now so I think we're a fair ways away from Maine really being involved in the recycling of solar panels."

"I think it's fair to say that all the options, wind, solar, battery, do have challenges with them and we've got to be smart about addressing those challenges. That doesn't mean we have the luxury of sticking with the fossil fuel, we've got to move off fossil fuel for both economic and environmental reasons, but we've also got to go and look at the alternatives with our eyes open and recognize that they have issues as well" - William Harwood - Public Advocate, Office of the Public Advocate

O'Connor's bill to establish a stewardship program for the recycling of solar panels in Maine was voted "Ought not to pass" by a majority of the Maine legislature. 7 other bills were brought before the 130th legislature regarding solar, however none directly addressed solar recycling.

Brian Bouchard, NewsSource8

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