



# Solarize - Here Comes the Sun!

Solarize Harrisonburg  
Massanutten Regional Solar Co-op  
Augusta Solar Co-op

Joy Loving, Local Leader

# Energy Co-ops go way back....

In the 1930s, the Rural Electrification Act brought power and electric co-ops to the country ....



# Times Have Changed....



But our power sources and infrastructure?  
Not so much.... Until recently!

# Enter Solar Co-ops...

In 2009 DOE helped Portland OR residents establish the 1<sup>st</sup> Solarize program



Since then, solarize has grown and grown....

# Where Are They?

AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, IA,  
IN, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MS, MN,  
MT, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OR,  
PA, RI, SD, TX, UT, VT, WA, WI, VA\*,  
WV



\*VA: Abingdon, Alexandria, Arlington Co, Augusta Co, Blacksburg, Charlottesville (2), Dumphries, Falls Church, Floyd Co, Fredericksburg, Halifax, Hampton Roads, Heathsville, Herndon, Leesburg, Lexington, Massanutten Region (2), Montgomery Co, Nelson Co, Northern Virginia Interfaith, Page Co, PEC (Piedmont Environmental Council), Rappahannock Co, Richmond (2), Roanoke, Vienna, Virginia Beach



# How does a Solar Co-Op work?

- Community that wants to go solar together
- Members as involved as they want
- Group decides/ usually has a sponsor & a facilitator
- Get site assessment and individualized proposal (group pricing)
- Advocate, share success, connect to others



# The Solar Coop Process

## 1. Attend an Info Session

Learn more about going solar and how neighborhood solar coops work.



## 2. Join Your Local Coop

Sign up online! Anyone can participate and there is no cost; the only requirement is that you want to go solar!



## 3. Get a Roof Review

Have your roof reviewed via satellite by CPN to make sure it's a good fit for solar energy.



## 4. Solicit Local Bids

Once the coop has 20-30 members, CPN solicits bids from local installers on behalf of the coop.



## 5. Review Bids as a Group

Coop members form a selection committee to review bids and select a single installer to complete all of the projects.



## 6. Get Individualized Proposal

Meet with the chosen installer to get an individualized proposal for a solar system for your home. This proposal will reflect the group discount.

## 7. Sign a Contract

Sign a contract directly with the installer.



## 8. Installation

Have solar installed on your home!



## 9. Celebrate!

Celebrate with the coop and help start other coops in your community!



# Why are They Happening?

↑ Cost of Electricity

↓ Cost of Solar

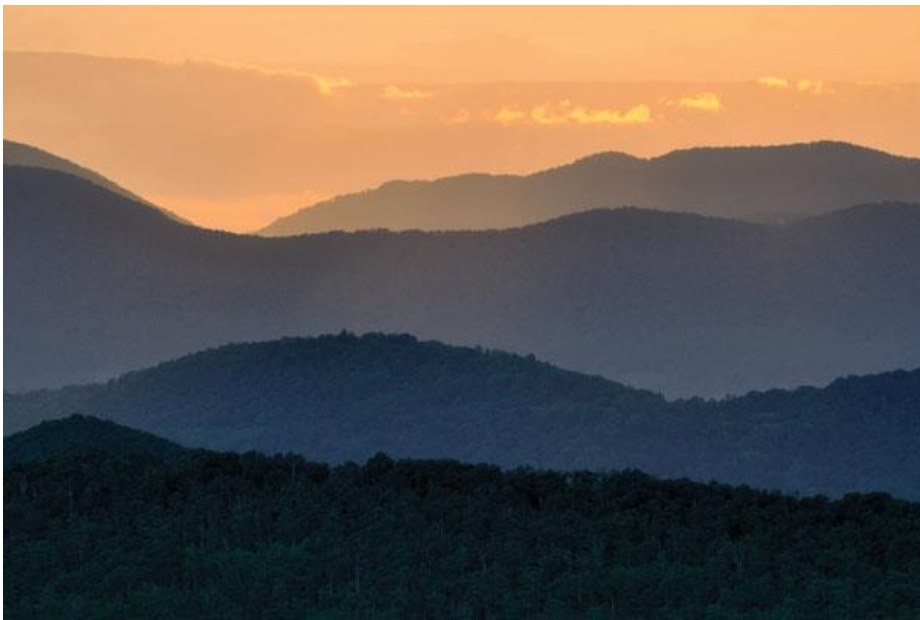
↑ Energy Freedom

↑ Energy Security

↑ Creation Care

↓ Carbon Footprint





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# Some Benefits of Solar

Federal Tax Credit (30% through 2016)

Net Metering—You're Still on the Grid

Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs)

REAP Grants/Loan Guarantees for Farmers &  
Small Businesses in Rural Areas





# Some Cost Considerations...

Solar priced per Watt (not by panel)

Selected installer offers discounted, standard price per Watt

Individualized, personalized contract & install

Solar = long-term investment (No moving parts; 30 yr. lifespan)

REAP grants & loan guarantees available + Federal tax credit

Farmers & small businesses in rural areas eligible to apply

USDA must say application “complete” before install begins

Rising energy prices (Dominion: 20% rate increase in last 7 yrs.)



# Who Can Join?

- Homeowners
- Small Businesses
- Farms
- Non-profits



# 3 Co-ops in Central Shenandoah Valley since Spring 2014....



200 Residents signed up; 68 signed contracts; last installs Jul 2015



110 Residents signed up; installs happening now



107 Residents signed up as of Nov 17; last signup date Jan 31, 2016



# Who Made These Happen?

A Partnership Between the Community  
and Non-Profits Dedicated to Helping  
People Go Solar!



# What's Involved in Making Solar Co-ops Like These Happen?

A sponsoring organization able to devote resources

A local organizer with staying power to coordinate all outreach and publicity

A facilitator organization to handle the huge management, technical, & oversight requirements

Good communications among the 3

Gauge community interest before decision to launch





# What are Some Lessons Learned?

“It takes a village”—actually a community--& that’s not so easy to achieve & to manage with scarce money, time & people (basically, volunteer) resources (herding cats, following up)

Knowing your target demographic, early branding and getting multiple & varied media items are crucial—we got better 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> times

Larger geographical areas are trickier than more condensed ones—word of mouth takes you farther in smaller, closer-knit community

In-person presentations to small groups feel like more productive communication than tabling at public settings—but ...

Vetting your facilitator up front is necessary but frequent communication is also essential

Publicizing public information sessions is vital and not so easy



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# How Do I Learn More About Massanutten Regional Solar Co-op?

<http://www.vasun.org/massanutten-regional-solar-co-op/>  
[https://www.facebook.com/massanuttenregionalsolarcoop?  
fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/massanuttenregionalsolarcoop?fref=ts)  
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