

# Accelerating Large-Scale Wind and Solar Energy in New York

A REPORT FROM THE *RENEWABLES ON THE GROUND ROUNDTABLE*

In 2016, New York State established a Clean Energy Standard, including a Renewable Energy Standard mandating that 50 percent of the state's electricity come from renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydropower by 2030. The Renewable Energy Standard is designed to fight climate change, reduce air pollution, provide a reliable and affordable low-carbon energy supply, and will help New York meet its goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

However, to succeed in meeting the State's "50 by 30" goal, it will be necessary to accelerate large-scale wind and solar power development across New York.

With an aim of achieving the Renewable Energy Standard, The Nature Conservancy and the Alliance for Clean Energy New York convened the *Renewables on the Ground Roundtable* to identify barriers to renewable energy development in New York and develop strategies to reduce those hurdles. The Roundtable brought together 37 individuals representing the wind and solar industries, conservation organizations, and land use planning and local government experts.

Based on key findings and recommendations regarding large-scale wind and solar development in New York, Roundtable participants developed and agreed on the following principles:

## **1. Accelerate the Development of Renewables to Meet the Renewable Energy Standard**

Accelerate construction of cost-effective wind and solar installations while maintaining the protection of natural resources and recognizing community and stakeholder values and environmental justice.

## **2. Contribute to the Success of New York's Renewable Energy Standard and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goal**

There is an opportunity and an obligation to contribute to the success of the Renewable Energy Standard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to counter climate change. Achieving these goals will require investment in and public support for large-scale renewable energy facilities as well as distributed resources and greater energy efficiency in New York state.

1. NYSPSC Order Adopting a Clean Energy Standard, CASE 15-E-0302 Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Implement a Large-Scale Renewable Program and a Clean Energy Standard. <http://on.ny.gov/2aKtpgA>

### **3. Increase Understanding of the Economic Benefits of Large-Scale Renewable Energy**

Promote the economic growth, jobs, health, environmental, and environmental justice benefits at the state and local levels of transitioning to clean and affordable energy.

### **4. Assist Local Governments and Fully Engage Communities in Advancing Renewable Development**

Provide communities and local governments with credible guidance, tools, resources, and support on land-use planning and zoning best practices to proactively plan for renewable energy development.

### **5. Increase Awareness of Policies and Practices to 1) Avoid, 2) Minimize, and 3) Mitigate Impacts**

Increase awareness of this policy framework among all stakeholders to build public confidence in siting practices.

### **6. Make New York's Energy Siting Processes More Efficient and Less Expensive**

Seize opportunities to make the Article 10 and SEQRA siting processes more efficient and less expensive, without sacrificing appropriate environmental review, stakeholder input, or public participation.

### **7. Balance Farmland Protection and Renewable Development**

Provide revenue for farmers while minimizing the removal of productive farmland by providing tools to help achieve and balance both outcomes.

### **8. Provide Renewable Energy While Advancing Environmental Justice and Equity**

Pursue a comprehensive approach by diverse stakeholders that includes partnering with local communities, reduction of harms from conventional energy, equitable sharing of benefits, and fostering economic and energy democracy to reduce environmental injustices and help to ensure the success of renewable energy projects and the Renewable Energy Standard.

### **9. Clarify Property Taxation for Renewables**

Make tax valuation methodologies and implications clear, transparent, and understandable for local jurisdictions and landowners.

### **10. Proactively Plan for Transmission**

The New York Independent System Operator (NYISO), New York State agencies, transmission owners, developers, and stakeholders should work together to identify and address transmission needs while minimizing impacts to environmental and community resources at a pace necessary to achieve the Renewable Energy Standard mandate.

In addition to these principles, the Roundtable participants developed problem statements and specific recommendations for actions by State agencies, local governments and regional organizations, land conservation and environmental organizations, agricultural and the renewable energy industries to address the problems.

It is our hope that this report will stimulate dialogue and action around the issues that were identified as barriers to renewable energy development so that New York State succeeds in meeting its Renewable Energy Standard.

The full *Renewables on the Ground Roundtable* report is available at [nature.org/nyenergy](https://nature.org/nyenergy).