



**Office of
Renewable
Energy Siting**

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**Testimony of
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**New York State Legislature
Senate Standing Committee on Finance
Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means**

2022-2023 Executive Budget Hearing

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Good morning Chair Kreuger, Chair Weinstein, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, Assembly Ways and Means Committee, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee and Assembly Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation, and other Members of the New York State Legislature. My name is Houtan Moaveni and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Renewable Energy (ORES or the Office). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the work and accomplishments of ORES in the past year, and the matters on which the Office expects to focus during State Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Before I discuss the Office's contributions toward New York State's nation-leading clean energy goals in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), I first wish to recognize and commend staff at ORES and its partner State agencies for their dedication and commitment to New York's renewable energy mission and the protection of the State's environment. Staff has worked tirelessly to stand up this new Office to fulfill its statutory duties on a timely basis, all while working within the constraints presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges of implementing the nation's first state office devoted exclusively to renewable energy siting during extremely difficult circumstances have been met with the professionalism, fairness and teamwork envisioned by Executive Law § 94-c.

I am pleased to report the following to the Members of the New York State Legislature.

As stated in Executive Law § 94-c, the purpose of this Office is to consolidate the environmental review and permitting of major renewable energy facilities in New York State to a single forum in which the Office may undertake a coordinated and timely review of proposed major renewable energy facilities to meet the State's renewable energy goals while ensuring the protection of the environment and consideration of all pertinent social, economic and environmental factors, with input from local governments and host communities.

Effective April 3, 2020, the Office began immediately working with prospective applicants on all new applications for major renewable energy facilities, including transfer applications from the Public Service Law Article 10 process to the Executive Law § 94-c process.

Within one year of the Office's creation, as required by statute, we promulgated a new regulatory framework for the siting of major renewable energy facilities. This framework includes uniform standards and conditions designed to streamline solar and land-based wind facility installation while avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating to the maximum extent practicable, potential significant adverse environmental impacts related to the siting, development, design, construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of such facilities.

At present, there are sixty-three (63) major renewable energy projects, totaling approximately 9,900 megawatts (MW) – enough to power roughly six million homes – in various stages of review before ORES. This includes twenty-five (25) Article 10 transfer applications that have opted-in to the Executive Law § 94-c siting process. We expect to receive several more applications this year. Currently, thirteen (13) out of the sixty-three (63) major renewable energy projects have submitted

a full siting permit application, and the balance of projects are either in an applicant-driven due diligence phase, or are proceeding through pre-application procedures.

To date, the Office has issued four final siting permits, totaling approximately 448 MW of renewable energy capacity:

- Riverhead Solar 2 (36 MW in Town of Riverhead, Suffolk County);
- Morris Ridge Solar Energy Center (177 MW in Town of Mount Morris, Livingston County);
- Watkins Glen Solar Energy Center (50 MW in Town of Dix, Schuyler County); and
- Heritage Wind Facility (up to 185 MW in Town of Barre, Orleans County).

ORES expects Fiscal Year 2022-23 will continue to see significant application activity as the pipeline of projects matures into full applications in the coming months. The 2022-23 Executive Budget proposes \$25 million in new appropriation authority to support the Office and its work. Additionally, the Executive Budget includes a \$10 million reappropriation on the Major Renewable Energy Development Fund. The \$25 million is needed to ensure the Office has adequate resources to accomplish its mission and achieve the State's climate goals, while ensuring the protection of the environment and consideration of all pertinent social, economic, and environmental factors.

Under Governor Kathy Hochul's leadership, ORES is well-positioned to implement its statutory responsibilities to help achieve New York State's nation-leading clean energy objectives. We are keenly aware that we have reached a critical moment with respect to our State's and our planet's ability to address the harmful environmental impacts of decades of fossil fuel-powered energy generation. Our State's ability to successfully and equitably transition away from the legacy of polluting fossil fuel generation is dependent on our commitment to the responsible siting of major renewable energy facilities.

I want to thank you for your critical partnership in supporting this Office as we work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect our natural resources, and provide long-term economic development opportunities for the State. We look forward to continuing to work hand-in-hand with all stakeholders as these facilities are developed and placed online.

Dated: February 1, 2022
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