



**Office of
Renewable
Energy Siting**

KATHY HOCHUL
GOVERNOR
HOUTAN MOAVENI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Testimony of
Houtan Moaveni
Executive Director
Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES)**

New York State Legislature

Senate Finance Committee

Assembly Ways and Means Committee

2023-2024 Executive Budget Hearing

February 14, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, Assembly Ways and Means Committee, 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 Siting (ORES or the Office). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the important work and accomplishments of ORES in the past year, and the matters the Office expects to focus on during State Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

To begin, I would like to thank staff at ORES and our partner State agencies for their dedication and commitment to New York's renewable energy mission and the protection of the State's environment. ORES has built an exceptional team of subject matter experts to undertake a coordinated and timely review of proposed major renewable energy facilities. The challenges of implementing the nation's first State office devoted exclusively to renewable energy siting have been met with the professionalism and integrity envisioned by Executive Law § 94-c. Through the diligence and dedication of staff, ORES has met or exceeded all its statutory deadlines.

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

To help the State meet its nation-leading clean energy goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), ORES has developed and implemented a permitting process that is comprehensive, transparent, and fair. This fact-based decision-making process stands as a regulatory model to efficiently and effectively enable the State's clean energy transition, while ensuring protection of our natural resources and consideration of all pertinent social, economic, and environmental factors, with input from host communities and local governments.

Starting on Executive Law § 94-c's effective date of April 3, 2020, the Office immediately began 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 date, the Office has issued eleven (11) final siting permits, totaling over 1.7 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity:

- Riverhead Solar 2 (36 MW in the Town of Riverhead, Suffolk County)
- Morris Ridge Solar Energy Center (177 MW in the Town of Mount Morris, Livingston County)
- Watkins Glen Solar Energy Center (50 MW in the Town of Dix, Schuyler County)
- Heritage Wind Facility (up to 185 MW in the Town of Barre, Orleans County)
- Hecate Energy Cider Solar (500 MW in the Towns of Elba and Oakfield, Genesee County)
- Greens Corners Solar (120 MW in the Towns of Hounsfield and Watertown, Jefferson County)
- Hemlock Ridge Solar (200 MW in the Towns of Barre and Shelby, Orleans County)
- Horseshoe Solar (180 MW in the Town of Caledonia, Livingston County and the Town of Rush, Monroe County)
- Homer Solar (90 MW in the Towns of Homer, Cortlandville, and Solon, Cortland County)

- Riverside Solar (100 MW in the Towns of Lyme and Brownville, Jefferson County)
- Tracy Solar (119 MW in the Towns of Orleans and Clayton, Jefferson County)

As demonstrated by the records of decision on the final siting permits issued to date, the Office conducted detailed, transparent, site- and project-specific environmental reviews for these eleven (11) siting permits, with robust public participation, including consideration of nearly 1,500 public and municipal comments, to ensure that the proposed facilities meet or exceed the requirements of Executive Law § 94-c and its implementing regulations. Most of these facilities were approved within six (6) months from the date on which applications were deemed complete, marking the most rapid pace of major renewable energy facility approvals in the State's history.

For a majority of the eleven (11) permitted facilities, host municipalities, applicants, and the Office took a collaborative, consent-based approach that resolved local concerns without the need for a full administrative hearing process. Local agencies and community groups had access to over \$1.7 million of funding to facilitate their participation in the permitting process. These facilities are expected to provide over \$200 million of benefits to the host communities and create more than 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs during construction and operation. As these projects proceed, ORES will continue to work collaboratively with the host municipalities and community stakeholders throughout the construction phase.

At this time, the Office has issued its first notice to proceed with construction, and site preparation is expected to begin this month. Final decisions are pending on four (4) complete siting permit applications, which must be made by the Office within one (1) year from the date they received their completeness determinations. Additionally, the Office has received two (2) permit applications that are currently under review for completeness. Collectively, these six (6) facilities have a proposed renewable energy capacity of 771 megawatts (MW).

The 2023-24 Executive Budget proposes \$26 million in new appropriation authority to support the Office and its work. The Office expects significant application activity to continue this fiscal year as the pipeline of projects matures into full applications in the coming months. This pipeline consists of sixty-two (62) projects totaling approximately 9 GW of proposed renewable energy capacity, that are in an applicant-driven due diligence phase or are proceeding through pre-application procedures in consultation with ORES, other New York State agencies, local governments, and community members. The \$26 million is needed to ensure ORES has adequate resources to accomplish its mission, namely the coordinated and timely review of proposed major renewable energy facilities.

Under the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul, ORES stands ready to confront the most pressing existential challenge of our time -- the threat of climate change. The State's commitment to a successful and equitable transition away from the legacy of polluting fossil fuel generation is dependent on a responsible major renewable energy facility siting process. ORES is well-positioned to help the State meet the clean energy goals of the CLCPA.

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 constructed.

Dated: February 14, 2023
Albany, New York