



PROTECTING CLEAN WATER TOGETHER

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

Community Solar Saves Water. Keeps It Clean. Saves Money, Too!

May 2023

Huh? What the heck does solar-generated electricity have to do with keeping drinking water clean and pure and abundant?

Other ways of generating electricity consume water in mind-boggling amounts. Fracking for gas-powered electric plants takes millions of gallons of water for every gas well. Coal mining uses tens of millions of gallons a day. Even hydroelectric loses prodigious amounts of water to evaporation.

Using solar panels consumes no water, emits no pollution, and releases no greenhouse gases. Manufacturing them, however, uses massive amounts of water and some pretty nasty chemicals.

So why is solar a better option?

In effect, electricity that comes from oil, gas, and coal uses water and spews pollution every time you turn on a light. Solar has a one-time, upfront "pollution expense" when it's manufactured — and then provides decades of pollution-free, water-friendly electricity.

Like a lot of people in the Brodhead watershed, though, you may live in the woods, with way too much shade to even think about solar, no matter how much it protects water and human life on earth.

A different way to go solar What if shade-dwellers, renters, and anyone who can't afford the upfront cost of installing solar could tap into a *community* array of solar panels?

Community solar may be coming to Pennsylvania, if the state legislature and governor okay an initiative by State Senator Rosemary Brown.

Community solar customers can either buy or lease a share of the solar panels in an offsite solar array. They get a credit on their regular electric bill for electricity generated by their share of the community system. So community solar saves money, too.

If getting electricity from the sun appeals to you, find out more about community solar in Pennsylvania. It has bipartisan support — tell your state representatives to get on board!

More about community solar in PA at: <https://www.penncapital-star.com/energy-environment/bipartisan-pa-bill-wouldauthorize-community-solar-projects-monday-morning-coffee/>



Community solar arrays are a fraction the size of industrial-scale solar, and can be located in ways that keep views and woodlands intact and protect wildlife and water. They can be settled alongside a farmer's field, school athletic field and other spaces that are already open to the sun, without bulldozing forests.