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Report: WV sites good for solar

By FRED PACE Feb 25, 2017



Darron Cummings

The solar farm at the Indianapolis International Airport is pictured, Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2017, in Indianapolis. Duke Energy and other are backing measures in the Indiana Legislature and several other states that would eventually end the ability of small operators to produce solar power. (AP Photo/Darron Cummings)

MORGANTOWN - A new report from an environmental consulting firm concludes that West Virginia has 220 square miles of "degraded land" that could be used for large-scale solar facilities.

Downstream Strategies described degraded land as land that has lost some of its natural productivity such as brownfields or old mine sites.

"The development of large-scale solar facilities on West Virginia's degraded lands represents one

opportunity for increased economic activity in the Mountain State," said Joey James, project scientist at Downstream Strategies and lead author of the report.

The sites identified by the Repowering America's Land Initiative include 12 in Wayne County, five in Cabell County, six in Putnam County and one in Lincoln County. Sites identified on post-mine lands add three more sites in Wayne County and one more in Putnam County.

"A total of 1,479 sites were found to be viable for large-scale solar facility development, based on an analysis that included solar irradiation, site size, proximity to roads and transmission lines, land cover and topography," James said.

Solar energy development is moving faster in neighboring states, James said.

"In Virginia, for example, 49 megawatts of solar projects have been installed, an additional 246 megawatts are currently under construction, and nearly 3,000 megawatts are under study," he said. "By comparison, less than four megawatts of solar projects have been built in West Virginia."

The first large-scale solar project in West Virginia may be built soon by Appalachian Power, which recently released a Request for Proposals for 25 megawatts of solar projects in West Virginia or Virginia, according to James.

See the full report online at www.downstreamstrategies.com/documents/reports_publication/utility-scale-solar-report_2-21-17.pdf.

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