



Historic Agreement Unites Diverse Stakeholders to Revolutionize Large-Scale U.S. Solar Development

Leading solar developers, environmental organizations, and groups supporting local interests align on solar development strategies that prioritize climate, conservation, and community.

October 12, 2023

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA and WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a landmark accord, major solar developers, conservation groups, agricultural organizations, environmental and environmental justice groups, and tribal entities announced today their agreement to advance large-scale U.S. solar development while championing land conservation and supporting local community interests. The agreement is the result of a 20-month “Solar Uncommon Dialogue” convened by Stanford’s Woods Institute for the Environment, the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The agreement marks a major turning point in resolving conflicts over developing major U.S. solar projects and related conservation and community concerns.

Over the next 10 years, U.S. solar energy output is expected to increase five-fold, helping to address climate change and bring clean and affordable energy to more communities. The rapid increase in utility-scale solar also means that the industry must address various issues, including agricultural land conversion, wildlife and habitat impacts, and community engagement. The Solar Uncommon Dialogue agreement stresses that the development of large solar projects must be transparent, equitable and efficient and acknowledges that this will require many trade-offs.

Signatories to the Solar Uncommon Dialogue agreement have committed to improving large-scale solar development based on the “3Cs”: climate, conservation, and community.

- **Climate** emphasizes minimizing carbon emissions through clean energy sources, like solar energy and other tools, including natural climate solutions;
- **Conservation** seeks to minimize impacts on natural and working lands; and
- **Community** commits to equitable distribution of renewable energy project benefits.

The signatories are convening [six working groups](#) that will address key issues and opportunities including community engagement, siting-related risk assessment and decision-making, energy and agricultural technologies, tribal relations, and policy solutions.

These working groups will focus on advancing the 3Cs via improved public participation practices, solar siting mechanisms, regulation, financial incentives, information tools, and other means. The goal is to create best practices that solar companies, local governments, and other stakeholders can use to effectively site solar projects.

“Major U.S. solar projects are critical to fighting climate change but are increasingly opposed across the nation due to significant community and land conservation concerns,” **said Stanford energy scholar Dan Reicher, who launched and leads the solar Uncommon Dialogue.** “It’s exciting how motivated the parties are to avoid these conflicts and develop high-impact solutions — a triple play for climate,

conservation, and community” added Reicher, who was U.S. Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

As the solar and storage industry grows, it’s critical that we prioritize local engagement,” **said Abigail Ross Hopper, president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA)**. “We are thrilled to join our partners in this landmark agreement to help us quickly, responsibly, and equitably deploy solar and storage projects. We’re confident that by thoughtfully addressing stakeholder concerns from the start, we’ll be able to deliver the equitable clean energy future we need to see.”

“We’re committed to accelerating the renewable energy buildout and have to go smart to go fast,” **said TNC CEO Jen Morris**. “Bringing environmental groups to the table ensures that we strike the right balance, delivering clean energy solutions while safeguarding our precious natural resources and communities.”

The solar agreement grew out of a Stanford-organized “Uncommon Dialogue,” a convening of cross-sector experts and stakeholders designed to find common ground and build consensus around specific environmental challenges. A previous Uncommon Dialogue agreement on hydropower and river conservation led to \$2.3 billion in federal funding for implementation of its working groups’ recommendations.

The solar dialogue and agreement have already spawned a new Uncommon Dialogue to address challenges facing U.S. electricity transmission development for solar, wind and other new clean energy projects.

Learn more about the [Solar Uncommon Dialogue](#) and how to participate in a working group.

Parties to the Solar Uncommon Dialogue Agreement

American Farmland Trust

Appalachian Voices

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Climate Adaptive Infrastructure

EDP Renewables

energyRe

Intersect Power

Invenergy

Land Trust Alliance

Lightsource bp

National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Refuge Association

Natural Resources Defense Council

North American Indian Center of Boston

Pine Gate Renewables

Solar Energy Industries Association

The Lyme Timber Company

The Nature Conservancy

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Union of Concerned Scientists

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

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About Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment:

The Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment is working toward a future in which societies meet people’s needs for water, food, health and other vital services while sustaining the planet. Part of the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, Woods is the university’s hub for interdisciplinary research about the environment. We bring together Stanford faculty, researchers and students from all seven schools, fostering research collaborations that can tackle challenges too complex for any one discipline to solve

alone. Our convening and external engagement efforts cross sectors as well, connecting Stanford's experts to their counterparts in government, business, NGOs, foundations and other academic institutions. These partnerships inform research priorities and link knowledge to action, advancing solutions to the most pressing environmental challenges of today and tomorrow.

About the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA):

The Solar Energy Industries Association® (SEIA) is leading the transformation to a clean energy economy, creating the framework for solar to achieve 30% of U.S. electricity generation by 2030. SEIA works with its 1,000 member companies and other strategic partners to fight for policies that create jobs in every community and shape fair market rules that promote competition and the growth of reliable, low-cost solar power. Founded in 1974, SEIA is the national trade association for the solar and solar + storage industries, building a comprehensive vision for the Solar+ Decade through research, education and advocacy. Visit SEIA online at www.seia.org and follow @SEIA on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

About The Nature Conservancy:

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at an unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 76 countries and territories—37 by direct conservation impact and 39 through partners—we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. To learn more, visit www.nature.org or follow @nature_press on Twitter.

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