
DIGEST

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HB 615 Engrossed

2025 Regular Session

Geymann

Abstract: Establishes notice, permitting, and siting requirements for solar power generation facilities with a footprint of 10 acres or more.

Proposed law provides definitions.

Proposed law provides for the jurisdiction and authority of the Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources over the regulation of solar power generation facilities and requires the promulgation of rules to implement proposed law.

Proposed law authorizes parish governing authorities to enact and enforce regulations more strict than the permitting and siting requirements in proposed law and provides that facilities must comply with all general regulations of parishes.

Proposed law requires notice to parish governments, legislators, and adjoining property owners prior to the submission of a permit application.

Proposed law requires a public meeting prior to the issuance of a permit and requires the applicant to provide public notice regarding the meeting.

Proposed law requires a permit from the Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources to operate a solar power generation facility with a footprint of 10 acres or more. Permit application requirements include:

- (1) Proof of compliance with notice requirements.
- (2) A decommissioning plan.
- (3) Financial security approved by the secretary.
- (4) A letter of clearance from the Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries.
- (5) A letter of clearance from the Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry.
- (6) Certification of compliance with applicable local laws.

Proposed law exempts facilities located in industrial zoned areas and on La. Economic Development

certified sites from obtaining the letters of clearance from the Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry.

Present law establishes fees for solar permit applicants and exceptions to these fee requirements.

Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law establishes siting requirements for facilities over 10 acres that are not on certified sites or in industrial zones, including setbacks and vegetative barriers applicable to adjoining properties, roadways, and waterways.

Proposed law allows residential property owners and facilities to agree to use a compensation model provided by proposed law instead of complying with the setback requirement.

Proposed law provides a limit for noise levels at the property line of the facility.

Proposed law provides a process for parishes to obtain a waiver from siting requirements from the House and Senate natural resources committees.

Proposed law specifically authorizes local government to regulate the following:

- (1) Site preparation and construction.
- (2) Drainage, runoff, and erosion control.
- (3) Composition and maintenance of vegetative barriers.
- (4) Facility lighting, signage, maintenance, and general upkeep.

Proposed law provides a default process in the absence of local regulation of these topics, requiring the facility to obtain approval from the appropriate parish governing authority for the following:

- (1) Plans for site preparation, including any grading or leveling, erosion control, and sediment runoff.
- (2) Drainage and storm water runoff plans.
- (3) Landscaping plans for the vegetative barrier.
- (4) Site maintenance plans.

Proposed law prohibits the following:

- (1) Chemical spraying to maintain facility sites, unless approved by the Commissioner of Agriculture and the appropriate parish governing authority.

- (2) Concentrating solar-thermal power technologies.
- (3) The purchase or use of property for solar energy development by foreign adversaries.

Proposed law requires solar facilities constructed prior to September 1, 2024, to come into compliance with proposed law by August 1, 2027, and requires solar facilities constructed prior to September 1, 2024, to come into compliance with proposed law to the extent practicable.

Proposed law requires a permit, financial security, and a decommissioning plan for the use of battery of other electrical storage for renewable energy and authorizes the Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources to promulgate rules for same.

Present law establishes a program within the Department of Energy and Natural Resources for research and development in solar energy and the technology of siting facilities, including participation in large-scale demonstrations of alternative energy systems and improving methods for the construction, design, and operation of solar facilities.

Proposed law repeals present law.

(Amends R.S. 9:1255(B) and (C); Adds R.S. 30:1121-1127 and 1141; Repeals R.S. 30:1151-1159)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to the original bill:

1. Change the vegetative barrier requirement by removing the requirement that evergreen trees be included, to add that the barrier be opaque, and adds an option to retain existing vegetation on site if it otherwise meets the vegetative barrier requirements.
2. Change the buffer applicable to natural and navigable waterways from a 500 foot setback with a 200 foot vegetative barrier to a 100 foot vegetative barrier only.
3. Change the requirement that all existing facilities come into compliance with the new law by August 1, 2027, to a requirement that all facilities constructed after September 1, 2024, come into compliance with the new law by August 1, 2027, and that facilities constructed prior to September 1, 2024, will be required to come into compliance with the new laws only to the extent practicable.
4. Make technical changes.