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## NEWS

# Solar field on Bristol landfill goes live



**BRISTOL COMMUNITY SOLAR, a 500kW project built on the site of the town's former landfill, began generating electricity last month. The brainchild of Bristol Energy Committee member Sally Burrell, BCS was spearheaded by the ACORN Energy Co-op, built by Aegis Renewable Energy and funded by more than 120 local investors. Image courtesy of Ian Albinson**

**January 13, 2022**

**By Christopher Ross**

BRISTOL — Renewable energy supporters were all aglow in Bristol this past Saturday, Jan. 8, lit up not only with a sense of accomplishment and hope but also by the sunshine pouring through their windows as they celebrated the completion of Bristol Community Solar (BCS), a 500kW array built on the site of the town's former landfill.

"A lot of us ask, 'How do you transform the energy infrastructure of a state like Vermont, where at the same time we're progressive and want renewable energy, but we're also conservative and don't want anything to change?'" said ACORN Energy Co-op President Ben Marks during the project's virtual celebration. "And our answer to that is: with openness and cooperation" and a heck of a lot of planning and work.

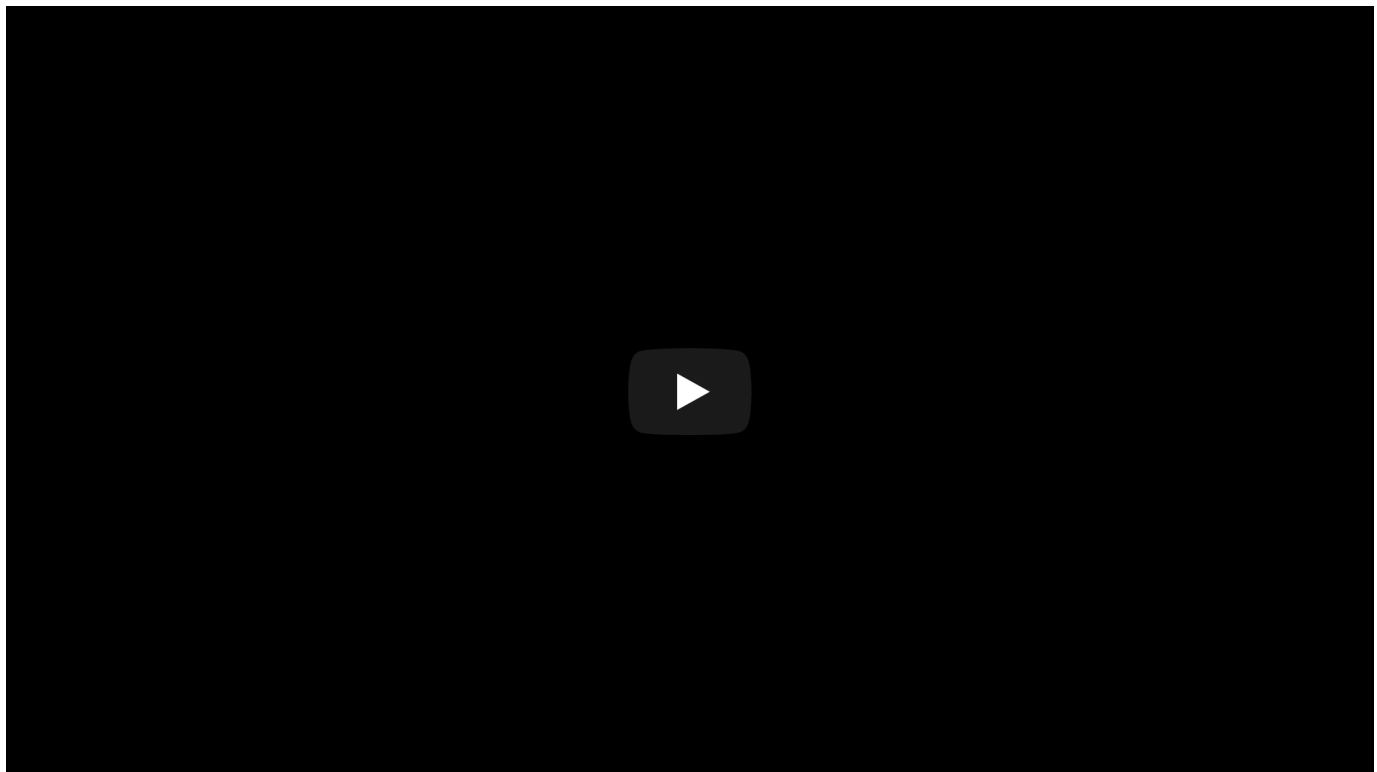
BCS was organized and built by ACORN and Waitsfield's Aegis Renewable Energy, supported by the town of Bristol and made possible from investments by Co-op Insurance and 120 residential, business, nonprofit and municipal members.

It began supplying the power grid with electricity on Dec. 22 — less than two years after it was pitched as a project by Bristol Energy Committee Chair Sally Burrell.

The array consists of 1,694 panels capable of producing more than 800,000kWh of energy every year — offsetting the rough equivalent of 1.3 million pounds of carbon dioxide, according to Aegis founder and President Nils Behn.

A number of elected officials were on hand to celebrate the project's completion, including Rep. Mari Cordes (D-Lincoln), Rep. Caleb Elder (D-Starksboro), Sen. Ruth Hardy (D-Addison County) and Congressman Peter Welch (D-Vermont).

"This is one of the reasons I love representing Addison County," Hardy said, backlit by a sun-filled window. "I feel like across the board, our county, our communities, our people come together to find really creative, determined solutions to really tough problems... As the mother of three kids who remind me pretty much every day that their future is dependent on our ability to find creative solutions like this, I just want to thank you on behalf of the next generation."



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Saturday's event also featured members of Vermont Interfaith Power and Light and the Interfaith Climate Action Network (ICAN), which promoted the project in their communities.

Not only did they encourage their members to live out their faith by investing in local solar power, said New Haven Congregational Church Pastor Abigail Diehl-Noble, but they also invited them to tithe on behalf of a nonprofit that would not otherwise have had the resources to go solar: Clemmons Family Farm in Charlotte. Through ICAN, people chipped in to buy Clemmons Family Farm shares in BCS, which will provide the farm with solar credits.

Building on a "60-year legacy of love and commitment to the community," the Clemmons family created a nonprofit in 2019 to preserve their farm as a safe environment for Black people, artists and community members; develop and maintain a network of artists of African heritage; and build a loving and supportive multicultural community.

"The work the Bristol solar community has done with ICAN and ACORN is exactly the sort of community we are so proud to be a part of," said Lydia Clemmons on Saturday. "The mission and the fact that you've reached out to us in this way and supported us is so touching and so inspiring, and I think that the work that is going on is an innovative model for everybody."

BCS members will soon start seeing solar credits on their power bills, said ACORN Solar Co-op member Tom Dunn.

And six years from now, they'll own the project.

"So unlike large projects that you drive by that are owned by faceless corporations someplace, this array is ultimately going to be owned by the people who are benefitting from it," Marks said. "And we feel very, very good about that."

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