



News Release

Loma Prieta, SF Bay and Redwood Chapters

Redwood Chapter: <http://redwood.sierraclub.org>

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sierra Club Acknowledges Several Bay Area Municipalities for Lowering Solar Permit Fees to Encourage Solar Power and Challenges Others to Take Similar Actions

The Sierra Club (Loma Prieta, San Francisco Bay and Redwood Chapters) have initiated a campaign to encourage municipalities with excessive permit fees and application processing delays to implement changes that will facilitate the installation of solar power. The Sierra Club has formally contacted dozens of city officials about this and is encouraging them to review solar permit fees.

Several municipalities in the Bay Area are at the forefront of making solar power systems accessible to middle-income homeowners, according to a survey of 109 jurisdictions by the Sierra Club (Loma Prieta, San Francisco Bay and Redwood Chapters). Unfortunately, others impose high permit fees and have frustrating permit processing delays.

The study found that for typical-sized residential rooftop installations, permit fees range from zero to as high as \$1,074. The average is \$365. Cities like Mill Valley issue solar permits over-the-counter without delays, while other cities take weeks. Some cities seem to use solar permit fees to generate revenue, not just to recover processing costs. State law prohibits this. Assembly Member Lois Wolk on 6/7/06 emailed a letter to all California cities encouraging minimum solar permit fees based on actual permitting costs incurred. In this letter, Wolk reminds cities they must now cease reviewing solar installations for aesthetic concerns and communicates the intent of the legislature in promoting solar power. Wolk's letter, which clarifies this legal requirement, can be downloaded from:

http://www.norcalsolar.org/resources/municipalities_files/WolkPVFeeLetter.pdf

In the greater San Francisco Bay Area, 34 municipalities have reduced solar permit fees (28 significantly so), over the past 11 months because of the efforts of local Sierra Club activists, public demand and media coverage. Sebastopol City Council Member Craig Litwin has said: "I hope Sebastopol can serve as a model to others."

California generally, and our region specifically, faces rising energy demand, diminishing in-state/regional generation, and increasing dependence on fossil fuel imports from unstable sources. Solar electricity is a clean, reliable, and a renewable solution that can alleviate much of our state's energy problems. Since local sunlight and available roof space are plentiful, only the number of installations limits the production potential of solar power. This news release and study are acknowledging city leaders for taking action to make solar energy more affordable. Redwood chapter Sierra Club has sent letters to the four cities with the highest solar fees the north bay region. "We anticipate similar success in reducing fees in Rio Vista, Vallejo, St. Helena, and Napa, once these cities realize their current fees are on the high end", says Jay Halcomb of the Redwood Chapter. Jane Bogner, with Sierra Club's Solano Group says, "We are especially pleased that Solano County has just recently reduced their fees - down to \$257 From \$1,113."

Charts available below show solar permit fees and how much they've changed over the past eleven months.

Solar Permit Fee Campaign: http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/global_warming/fee_study.htm

Solar Permit Fee Study: http://lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/global_warming/pv_permit_study.pdf