



Office of the Public Advocate

Your Advocate for Affordable Utility Service

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COMMUNITY SOLAR GUIDEBOOK

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SOLAR?

Community solar, introduced in 2019, is designed to promote the expansion of solar production in Maine. Eligible **solar projects** receive credit for each **kilowatt hour** of electricity the solar project generates.

Utility customers can sign up with the owner of a **solar project** to receive a share of credits generated by the community solar project.

Solar credits are applied by your electric utility to offset the usage on your electric bill. This reduces your electric bill.

Learn more at
maine.gov/meopa/solar

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Then, you will receive a bill from your solar company for the value of the credits you received on your utility bill, less some agreed upon discount rate. As a solar subscriber, you'll have a bill from both your utility and your solar company.



Electric Bill Glossary

Understanding the Basics of Electric Utilities

Supply: The actual electricity generated and sold to customers. In Maine, your electric utility does not own electric generation facilities and does not set the price for or profit from supply. Instead, your supply price is either set by the Standard Offer Supplier or by a competitive electric supplier you choose.

Delivery: Delivery involves the transmission of electricity from a generating site to an electrical substation, and distribution to homes and businesses using the poles and wires we see every day. Delivery rates are regulated at the state and federal level because your electric utility has a monopoly over delivery of electricity to your address.

PUC: The Public Utilities Commission regulates utilities operating in the State of Maine.

Standard Offer: The default electricity supply rate available to any Mainer. The price is set annually through a competitive bidding process managed by the PUC. Your electric utility bills you for this supply price but passes the money along to the supplier without a mark-up.

CEP: Competitive Electricity Providers supply power as an alternative to the Standard Offer. Consumers can compare CEP rates at maine.gov/supplyrates. Be aware that CEP prices may change without notice. Your electric utility bills you for this supply price but passes the money along to the supplier without a mark-up.

CMP: Central Maine Power delivers electricity across Central and Southern Maine.

Versant Power: Delivers electricity across Northern and Eastern Maine.

kWh: Energy usage is measured in kilowatt hours. Your amount of kWh usage can be found on your bill.

Community Solar Project: Also known as a solar farm or front-of-the-meter solar. A solar farm is an array of solar panels that generates power under an arrangement that allows the project to earn kWh credits that can be applied to customer bills, rather than selling their power into the wholesale energy market. It can be located anywhere in the same utility distribution territory as the subscribing customer, rather than the customer's property.

Additional definitions can be found at maine.gov/meopa/glossary.



Solar and Your Bill

Understanding the Impact of a Community Solar Subscription

CMP

Your Generation Details (kWh)

You can find definitions and explanations of Net Energy and Distributed Generation invoices on our website at cmpco.com/NEB-DG

Fixed Percentage	Billing Period	Usage	Allocated Generation	Banked Generation	Unused Expired Credits
0.170000%	04/10/26-05/11/26	499	810	1,204	0
0.170000%	03/11/26-04/09/26	620	656	893	0
0.170000%	02/10/26-03/10/26	664	701	857	0
0.170000%	01/13/26-02/09/26	734	341	820	0
0.170000%	12/11/25-01/12/26	1,045	285	1,213	0
0.170000%	11/08/25-12/10/25	806	273	1,973	0
0.170000%	10/10/25-11/07/25	404	423	2,506	0
0.170000%	09/11/25-10/09/25	318	792	2,487	0
0.170000%	08/12/25-09/10/25	431	927	2,013	0
0.170000%	07/11/25-08/11/25	525	1,053	1,517	0
0.180000%	06/11/25-07/10/25	455	839	989	0
0.180000%	05/10/25-06/10/25	492	781	605	0

**This is a sample. Your informational table can usually be found on page 2 or 3 of your CMP bill*

Fixed Percentage: Explains what percentage of the solar farm's output you have subscribed to for your home.

Billing Period: Describes the time period the rest of the row is referring to.

Usage: Describes how much energy, in kilowatt hours, your home used that month.

Allocated Generation: Shows how many solar credits you received from your subscribed solar farm that month.

Banked Generation: Shows how many solar credits remain after this month and are available for future use. Solar credits expire after one year.

Unused Expired Credits: Shows solar credits that have gone unused and expired. Any credits you paid for in this column should be refunded to you by your solar company.



Solar and Your Bill - continued

Many Community Solar companies promise a savings between 10-20% compared to your normal electric bill. However, this doesn't mean your utility bill is automatically discounted every month - community solar and its billing are a bit more complicated.

In the simplest terms, your electric bill is based on the amount of energy you use. Community solar subscribers purchase “solar credits” that reduce the amount of energy usage on the electric bill. **Note: Subscribers have a separate bill for solar credits that comes from their solar provider.** Customers often purchase more credits in the summer to bank and use in the winter to reduce their electric bill. This results in higher solar bills in the late spring/summer months and lower solar bills during the winter months.

Most companies bill based on when the credits are generated, but some companies bill based on when solar credits get used. Make sure you fully understand the billing process before signing up.

VERSANT

VERSANT POWER	
Net Energy Billing Credits	
	kWh
Opening Credit Balance	692.87
Credits Received	224.98
Credits Applied this Period	-254
Credits Expired	0
Net Change in Credits	-29.02
Closing Credit Balance (as of Apr 17, 2026)	663.85

**This is a sample. Your informational table can usually be found on page 3 of your bill*

- Opening Credit Balance:** Describes the kWh credits you have as of the previous billing period.
- Credits Received:** Describes the new kWh credits provided to you during this billing period.
- Credits Applied:** Shows the credits used to reduce your usage this billing period, which will be subtracted from your balance. **Credits Expired** are also subtracted from your balance.
- Closing Credit Balance:** Shows how many solar credits you have left-over after this month, to be used in the future. **Note:** your solar company is required to refund you for credits you have paid for that end up expiring.



Can Solar Save You 15%?

Fact-Checking Community Solar Salespeople

The amount a subscriber owes to the solar company is negotiated between the subscriber and the solar company. It is not set by the utility or the **PUC**. In this case, it would be more accurate to say that you could save up to 15% of the value of the credits that show up on your bill, and 85% of the value must be paid to the solar company. You will continue to be responsible for your utility's monthly minimum charges. These charges cannot be offset by solar credits.

It is also possible that your subscription to the solar project may not be correctly sized to offset your full kWh usage each month. The details of your subscription size must be negotiated with the solar company. Refer to the diagram on page 6 for a brief overview of the flows of energy and payments to and from the utility, solar company, and consumer.

Community Solar vs. Competitive Energy Provider

maine.gov/ meopa/solar	Competitive Electricity Supply	Community Solar
What do I get from this company?	This company provides your electricity supply – shown on the last page of your electricity bill.	This company provides kWh “credits” on electricity bill to reduce how much usage your utility charges you for.
How do I pay my bill?	Typically paid through your monthly utility bill.	Separate bill arrives 30-60 days after your monthly utility bill. Paid directly to solar provider.
Who enforces consumer protections?	Public Utilities Commission (800) 452-4699	Attorney General (800) 436-2131 Public Utilities Commission (800) 452-4699

Keep in mind that 15% is a commonly used discount advertised by solar companies, but it is not required by law. The rate you pay will depend on your agreement with the solar company and it could vary over time. It is very important that you read and understand the agreement before signing up for a community solar program.



My Solar Bill Got Higher.

Was I Scammed? What Can I Do?

This can happen because the time when the most billing credits are generated by a solar project (summer) does not align with your electricity usage. Some solar companies may issue large bills that coincide with when the credits are generated by their solar projects in the spring and summer. If you have heat pumps or other electric heat, you might use more electricity in the winter. Your solar credits are banked in your utility account and will offset your electricity usage throughout the year, for up to 12 months.

Many customers are surprised by the large bills and may not have budgeted appropriately to pay the amount due to the solar company when it is due. For this reason, it is very important to understand how the solar company will bill you for the credits you purchase from them.

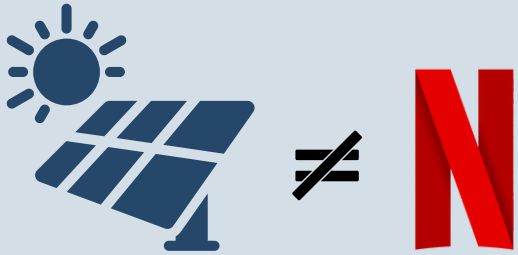


The solar companies are independent companies and have no affiliation with Central Maine Power or Versant Power. The utilities are responsible for applying the applicable number of kWh credits to your account based on communication from your solar company. You will usually receive one bill from your utility and a separate bill from the solar company to pay for the generation of kWh that resulted in the credits that have been applied to your utility bill.



How to Cancel A Solar Subscription

Understanding billing lags and cancellation periods

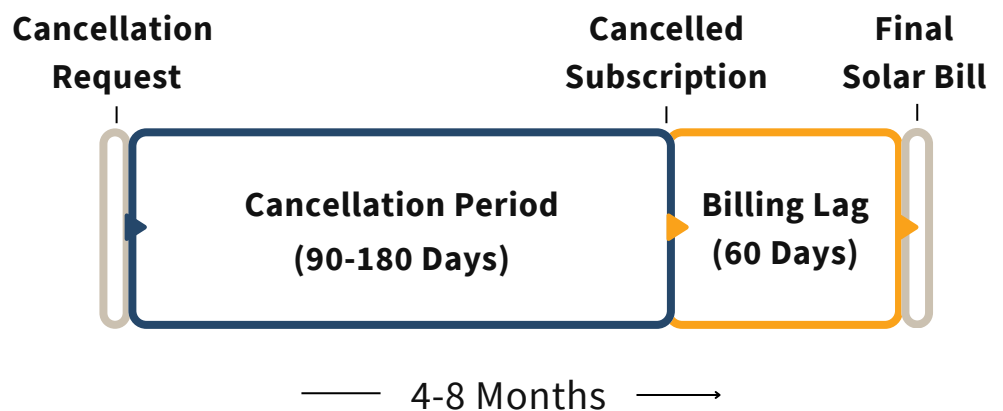


Many consumers are used to subscriptions that can be ended relatively quickly like a streaming service.

Community solar subscriptions are **not** like that.

Cancellation periods are set by your contract with the solar company and often range from **90 days to 180 days**. They are followed by a billing lag of around **60 days**.

This means that many people who cancel a solar subscription **receive solar bills for 4-8 months** after the initial request.



First Bill Cancellation Rule:

If you cancel anytime before, or up to **five days** after, your first solar bill, you are **only responsible for paying that first bill**.

However, customers will usually still see solar credits on their electric bills for **a couple of months** afterward.

Ask your utility if you can keep your solar credits when you move to another location within the same utility service area. If you know you are moving away, be sure to draw down your **banked credits** before you move. If you close your utility account and move out of the area, any banked credits will be lost.



If you are considering enrolling in community solar, **read your contract carefully** before signing!



Community Solar FAQ

Can I combine a CEP with community solar to save more money on my bill?

Because your usage is offset by solar credits, you would not receive much benefit from a competitive electricity supplier (also known as a CEP) as a solar customer. (CEPs charge based on net usage; your usage as a solar customer is likely to be zero or close to it.) As to which would save you more money, you will have to do your research and determine that for your own situation.

Where can I see my usage, purchased credits, and banked generation information?

This information is reflected on the bill under your meter details. You will see your actual usage in kWh, credits based on kWh generation for that billing cycle, and the number of banked credits, if any. How to read solar information is covered on previous pages of this guide.

How to cancel Community Solar?

In order to cancel your Community Solar subscription, you will need to contact your solar provider directly. CMP and Versant cannot cancel your solar subscription for you. Typically there is a 60-day minimum notice window. If you have any trouble cancelling or have any questions, please call The Office of the Public Advocate at **207-624-3687** or email at **opa@maine.gov**

Can I transfer my banked credits to another customer?

No. Community solar credits are not transferable or shareable after they have been applied to your account. If you are concerned that you are purchasing too many kWh credits, you should contact your solar company to discuss your subscription size.

I can't pay my solar subscription bill. Can they shut off my power?

No. As long as you continue to pay your monthly utility bill (from Central Maine Power or Versant Power), you are not at risk of disconnection. The solar company can seek to collect any unpaid charges similar to any other creditor, but may not impose excessive fees or penalties beyond the costs of collection.



Is Community Solar Right For You?

Will community solar save you money?

A community solar subscription allows a customer to purchase solar credits that reduce how much usage the electric company charges for. It is important to clearly communicate with your solar company to ensure your subscription is the right size in order to achieve any savings. You will continue to be responsible for your utility's monthly minimum charges. These types of charges cannot be offset by solar credits.

Should you share your account number?

Solar companies require a utility account number to sign a customer up for a subscription. Make sure you feel fully comfortable with how the subscription will work before sharing your account information. Note: Many solar companies set up automatic payments for their subscribers, so you may be asked for an email address, a credit card number and even banking information. Be cautious about who you share your private information with.

I am in a dispute with a solar company. What are my rights?

You have the right to have your dispute resolved by the **Maine Public Utilities Commission**.

Our office can assist you with the process. **Contact us at** 207-624-3687 or opa@maine.gov

Please note that you have the right to cancel your agreement, orally or in writing, until **five days** after you receive your first bill or invoice from the solar company and you will only be responsible for paying that first bill or invoice. If you are told that you will be responsible for additional fees or bills, contact our office for assistance.



Questions To Ask Solar Salespeople

1. What is the cancellation policy? What happens if I move?
2. When will I receive my disclosure form? (*Never sign a blank disclosure form*).
3. When will I start to receive credits and savings?
4. What % discount will be applied to my credits?
5. Will my income-qualified benefits apply to the solar bill?
(Note that you cannot use these benefits to buy solar credits)
6. Do I receive credit for a fixed amount each month or a credit to match my monthly usage?
7. How long is the contract term?
8. How does billing work? What company will be on the bill?
9. Do I need a smart meter to participate?
10. How does the subscription amount compare to my annual electricity usage?
11. Will I see higher solar bills in the summer and lower solar bills in the winter?

Make sure you fully understand the billing process and cancellation policies before signing up.

If you have an issue with your electric bill, reach out to us:
207-624-3687 opa@maine.gov maine.gov/meopa