

Executive Summary of Commercial PV Permit Fee Report for Ventura County, 2010

by Sierra Club, Los Padres and Loma Prieta Chapters, 12/29/2010

A fall 2010 survey by the Sierra Club revealed wide variation in permit fees charged for commercial rooftop photovoltaic (PV) energy systems by municipalities in Ventura County. The survey found that fees for commercial PV projects of 131 kW in size varied from \$1,500 to over \$14,000. High fees can discourage businesses and residences from making good, long-term, high-yield investments in solar power. Six (55% of the surveyed municipalities) are charging fees that exceed the maximum cost-recovery levels identified in this report for commercial PV projects.

The time needed for city staff to review and inspect a commercial PV project does not vary linearly by system size. For instance, interviews conducted in the preparation of this report revealed that the difference in time needed to process a 100 kW PV project is about two to three times longer than a 10 kW project (not ten times longer). Basing fees on the value of the solar equipment inflates permit costs to unreasonably high levels, especially for larger, more expensive solar power projects. To recover costs, therefore, permit fees should be based on specific review times and billable hourly rates and not on PV project valuations.

The authors of this study have developed a free, public fee calculator spreadsheet for PV systems mounted on commercial rooftops to help municipalities determine cost recovery:

www.SolarPermitFees.org/PVFeeCalcCommercial.xls.

This report recommends best practices that municipalities can adopt to assure greater consistency, and help our society develop an energy source that leads to a healthier, safer, and more stable community. These include setting permit fees at cost-recovery levels, and instituting streamlined permit processing procedures.

You can see the detailed survey responses at: www.solarpermitfees.org/PVFeesVentura2010.html.

Solar Electric Permit Fees for Commercial Installations in Ventura County Report:

www.SolarPermitFees.org/PVFeeStudyVentura.pdf

Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter Solar PV Permit Fee Campaign:

www.SolarPermitFees.org

Web site for Ventura County Commercial PV permit fee report (Dec. 2010):

www.solarpermitfees.org/ventura.html

This executive summary: www.SolarPermitFees.org/PVFeeVenturaExecSum.pdf

Key recommendations: www.SolarPermitFees.org/PVPermitFeeRecommend2010.pdf

PV Permit Fees, 131 kW Commercial Systems, Ventura County as of 12/29/2010

Ranked by Fee Municipality	131 kW Fee
Santa Paula	\$14,240
Camarillo	\$10,346
Ojai	\$9,510
Thousand Oaks	\$3,525
Moorpark	\$3,500
Fillmore	\$2,700
Oxnard	\$2,414
Ventura	\$2,065
Ventura County	\$1,756
Simi Valley	\$1,703
Port Hueneme	\$1,500
Average	\$4,842

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