

# Western Massachusetts Solar Forum

## Session 2: Solar and Land Use in Massachusetts

### Speaker Bios

#### **Andrew Toomajian**

**Commercial Business Development Manager**  
**SEBANE | SunBug Solar**

Andy Toomajian is a S.E.B.A.N.E. member and a Commercial Business Development Manager for Sunbug Solar. He holds a Masters Degree in Architecture from UMass Amherst and brings an extensive background in sustainability and design to his work.



#### **Andy Finton**

**Conservation Ecologist**  
**The Nature Conservancy**

Andy Finton is a Conservation Ecologist at The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts. Andy collaborates with land trusts, state agencies, and other partners to conserve important landscapes across the state, using the latest ecological information and spatial analyses. He co-authored the 2022 BioMap, as well as the first BioMap (2001) and BioMap2 (2010). Andy has a Bachelor's degree from Cornell University, and a Masters from UMass, Amherst.



#### **Clem Clay**

**Director**  
**Extension Agriculture Program at UMass Amherst**



#### **John Rogan**

**Assistant Professor**  
**Clark University**

John Rogan is a Professor of Geography, in the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. His research involves landscape ecology, urban forestry, fire ecology, satellite remote sensing and GIScience.



## **Jonathan Thompson**

**Senior Ecologist  
Harvard Forest**

Thompson's research focuses on long-term and broad-scale changes in forest ecosystems, with an emphasis on quantifying how land use - including harvest, conversion, and land protection - affects forest ecosystem processes and services.



## **Josh Hilsdon**

**Commercial Design & Sales Consultant  
PV Squared Solar**

Josh Hilsdon has spent the last decade at PV Squared designing and selling residential and commercial solar projects for clients across Western MA. Whether he's navigating the twisting roads of the hill towns, or walking through the city centers, Josh sees the built environment as a constellation of solar projects already completed, and those that are yet to come. Josh holds a B.A. from Clark University in Environmental Studies, and lives with his wife and son in Greenfield, MA.



## **Kenneth Comia**

**Deputy Director of Land Use and Environment  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission**

Ken Comia, AICP, currently serves as a Deputy Director of Land Use and Environment at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in Springfield, providing technical and comprehensive planning and zoning services to forty-three communities in Western Massachusetts. He has previously worked as a Town Planner and Conservation Agent for the town of Southbridge, Massachusetts, land use planner for communities in Central Florida, and has held positions in New York City and Boston in non-profits, public and private sectors ranging from transportation, parks and open space to affordable housing. Additionally, he is currently the Vice President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association.



## **Kerry Judge**

**Program Coordinator  
Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources**

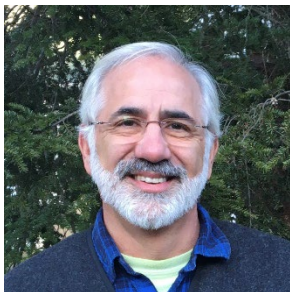
Kerry is a Program Coordinator with DOER's Renewable Energy Division, where she works across a variety of the Division's programs including the SMART program, and helped lead the Technical Potential of Solar Study. Prior to joining DOER, she received a Masters in Public Policy and Administration from UMass Amherst.



**Lena Entin**  
**Interim Co-Director**  
**Neighbor to Neighbor**

Lena Entin is Interim Co-Director at Neighbor to Neighbor - Massachusetts, a member-led organization with chapters in Holyoke, Springfield, Worcester, and Lynn that are build power for our collective wellbeing in Massachusetts. In Holyoke, Lena led N2N's first local environmental justice work, leading the chapter in a successful campaign to shut down the Mt. Tom coal plant and transition to solar energy.

**Michelle Manion**  
**Vice President of Policy and Advocacy**  
**Massachusetts Audubon Society**



**Scott Jackson**  
**Extension Professor**  
**University of Massachusetts, Amherst**

Scott Jackson is Extension Professor in the Department of Environmental Conservation at the University of Massachusetts Amherst where he teaches courses on wetlands and wildlife conservation and management. Scott's research interests include landscape connectivity, wetland assessment and monitoring, impacts of roads and highways on wildlife and ecosystems, and landscape-based ecological assessment. As a member of the UMass Landscape Ecology Lab, Scott contributed to the development of landscape assessment tools and approaches including the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS), Designing Sustainable Landscapes (DSL) and Critical Linkages. He serves on the Whately Conservation Commission.



**Zara Dowling**  
**Research Fellow**  
**UMass Clean Energy Extension**

Zara Dowling is a Research Fellow with UMass Clean Energy Extension, where her work focuses on addressing effects of renewable energy development on wildlife, as well as community-level planning for clean energy and carbon neutrality. Among other roles, she oversees Clean Energy Extension's pollinator-friendly certification program for solar arrays. Zara earned her PhD in 2018, studying approaches to minimize the effects of offshore wind energy development on bats. She is a member of her town Energy Committee, Select Board, and Conservation Commission in New Salem, MA.