

ECONOMY

# Solar firm Energix fined again for Virginia environmental violations

*The latest order from the state Department of Environmental Quality marks the third year in a row that the company has faced civil penalties.*



by **Matt Busse**  
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Wytheville Solar, off Lovers Lane in Wythe County, is shown in this satellite photo. Courtesy of Google Maps/Airbus, Commonwealth of Virginia, Maxar Technologies.

A company behind multiple utility-scale solar farms in Southside and Southwest Virginia has been cited for the third year in a row for violating state environmental regulations and must pay a civil penalty of \$158,000.

Energix Renewables has agreed to correct the problems at solar facilities in Buckingham, Henry, Sussex and Wythe counties, according to a Virginia Department of Environmental Quality [consent order](#) posted online Friday.

The violations largely involve improper handling of erosion, sediment and stormwater runoff from construction activity, according to the DEQ order. The state agency will [accept public comments](#) through June 21 before issuing its final order.

A six-figure civil penalty from the DEQ [is relatively unusual](#), but DEQ spokesperson Irina Calos noted that the Energix order applies to seven sites under one operator and that civil charges are higher for facilities with a history of noncompliance.

“DEQ’s robust permitting, compliance, and enforcement programs ensure that developers are aware of the requirement to abide by all applicable laws, regulations, and agreements, and the consequences for not adhering to them,” Calos said via email.

Representatives with Energix Renewables did not respond to requests for comment. The Arlington-based company is the U.S. subsidiary of the Israeli firm Energix Group, which also has operations in Poland, and describes itself as “one of the leading solar energy developers in the Mid-Atlantic.”

The 33-page DEQ order details multiple on-site inspections that the agency conducted. The order covers three phases of Energix’s 66-megawatt Axton Solar off Centreville Road in Henry County, the 20-megawatt Wytheville Solar off Lovers Lane in Wythe County, two phases of the 118-megawatt Waverly Solar in Sussex County and the 20-megawatt Buckingham II Solar in Buckingham County.

Examples of problems identified included a stream crossing for vehicles that had been built without state approval in Axton, sediment traps and basins that had not been properly installed in Wytheville, and areas of the Buckingham site that needed vegetative maintenance and silt fencing.

Last year, the **DEQ fined Energix** \$97,651 for violations at the Axton, Buckingham and Wytheville locations plus four sites in Appomattox, Henry, King William and Prince George counties.

In 2022, Energix **was fined \$68,250 for violations** at its Wytheville site and **\$23,772.50 for violations** at its Buckingham site.

While the DEQ's latest order described a number of observed violations, it also noted instances when inspectors saw problems during a site visit and found them corrected during a subsequent visit, or when Energix submitted photographs of corrective actions following an inspection.

In recent years, solar energy developers have been drawn to Southside Virginia in particular because of its relatively inexpensive, flat land. But that has sparked **pushback in some localities** where residents have expressed concern about solar projects' impacts on property values, bucolic views, the environment and the availability of agricultural land.

In March, the Patrick County Board of Supervisors narrowly **gave Energix approval** to build the county's first solar farm, a 12-megawatt project planned for 211 acres southeast of the town of Stuart.

At a public hearing, two dozen residents spoke about the project, with all but one asking supervisors to vote against it. Among other concerns, speakers cited Energix's previous DEQ penalties.

At that hearing, Energix representative Shawn Henderson said that prior to the 2023 citations, the company invited DEQ to tour its Virginia sites, and he said most of the problems identified were minor.

"Those issues have been resolved with DEQ and all of our sites are in compliance," Henderson said at the March 11 supervisors meeting.

Calos agreed that the issues described in last year's order had been resolved.

"This most recent consent order details the subsequent noncompliance and corrective actions required to resolve the noncompliance described in the order," Calos said.