



First two rows of racking being outfitted with panels.

## Community solar nears completion

By NICK ZITER

PUTNEY - Construction of Vermont's first community-owned solar garden is almost complete. This week began the final stages of installing panels in the community array. The array is expected to go online within the next two weeks.

The project is a collaborative effort between SunFarm Community Solar, the Clean Energy Collective and Integrated Solar. It will be connected to the grid through Green Mountain Power.

The community solar garden is a 147kW array that consists of 588 fixed solar collectors. The panels are owned by local individuals and businesses who are looking to reduce their electricity costs with renewable solar energy.

The community-owned solar model allows anyone who had a bill through GMP before the merger with CVPS to own panels. It is not restricted to Putney residents. Panel owners will receive monthly credit on their GMP utility bill in the same way as anyone with a home solar array.

Community solar allows many Vermonters who were previously unable to invest in solar the opportunity to do so. Some of these people include renters, those without a site for solar and people who can't afford the high up-front cost of a home system.

A single panel in the community array is just \$813. With financing set up through the Vermont State Employees Credit Union, a typical home could go full solar for just \$27 a month.

Included in the cost of panels is a comprehensive insurance and maintenance package requiring no out of pocket expense after purchase for the 50 year projected lifetime of the panels.

To date, the community array has over 45 panel owners, accounting for most of the array's capacity. While space is still available, the array is expected to sell out shortly.

Project coordinator, SunFarm Community Solar based in Putney, is taking reservations for the remaining capacity in the array. For more information on participating in community solar contact SunFarm by phone at 802.536.4471, email at [info@vtsolargardens.com](mailto:info@vtsolargardens.com) or visit their website at [www.sunfarmvt.com](http://www.sunfarmvt.com).



Integrated Solar hard at work.



Panel owners Gordon & Mary Hayward.