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Great Rivers Environmental Law Center Intervenes in Missouri Public Service Commission on Behalf of Net Metering

Suppose you put solar panels on your home or business to generate your own electricity. Most of the time you will not generate enough, but sometimes you'll have power to spare. If you "interconnect" your system to the utility grid, you can get power when you need it and feed clean energy back into the grid when you don't. With "net metering," a single meter spins backwards or forwards, and you pay the utility for the net amount of electricity you use, over and above what you generate.

The federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAAct) requires every state to consider adopting Congressional standards for interconnection and net metering if they do not already have comparable standards. Missouri has what it calls a net metering law, but it is not true net metering; customer-generators have to pay retail rates to the utility but get credited for their own power at the utility's avoided cost—a fraction of the retail rate. In addition, the law burdens the customer-generator with expenses for testing, insurance, additional metering, and "all reasonable standards and requirements" the utility sees fit to impose.

The Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC) has opened proceedings to comply with EPAAct. Great Rivers Environmental Law Center has intervened on behalf of a coalition of groups advocating clean energy: Concerned Citizens of Platte County, the Sierra Club, Heartland Renewable Energy Society, Mid-Missouri Peaceworks, the Audubon Society, and Ozark Energy Services, a small company in Joplin that designs and installs small renewable energy systems.

"We hope the PSC is ready for true net metering in Missouri," said Henry Robertson, staff attorney at Great Rivers Environmental Law Center. "People who generate their own clean electricity are doing a service to society at great expense to themselves. Net metering will never pay them back, but it's an incentive. Besides, it's only fair when they're feeding electricity into the grid for others to use."

Great Rivers is a nonprofit, public interest environmental law firm in St. Louis that provides free legal services to those working to promote clean energy, clean air and clean water. Its web address is: www.greatriverslaw.org.