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## Wise County Receives SolSmart Gold Designation for Advancing Solar Energy Growth

*New Designation Announced at Groundbreaking for Solar Project at Mineral Gap  
Data Center*

**Wise County, Va.** – Wise County received a Gold designation from the national [SolSmart](#) program for making it faster, easier and more affordable for homes and businesses to go solar. The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) partners with the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to serve as [a no-cost technical advisors](#) with the program.

“What a great step for Wise County as they prepare for more clean energy development, a boost in the local economy and contributing to established goals in the Commonwealth,” said **Virginia Energy Director John Warren**. “We hope more localities will follow suit not only by preparing for renewable energy developments but by seeing these innovative repurposing opportunities on formerly mined land as Wise County and its partners did for their solar development at the Mineral Gap Data Center.”

Wise County’s new SolSmart Gold designation was recognized at the groundbreaking for the solar installation at the Mineral Gap Data Center located in the industrial park. The Wise County Industrial Development Authority received a \$500,000 Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant from Virginia Energy for site preparation. This is the first solar project under construction in the county and was beneficial toward the Gold designation.

"Achievement of the SolSmart Gold designation is a prime example of how Wise County has committed to becoming a regional leader in alternative energy. We have a great opportunity to embrace our history of energy production while staying on the cutting edge of solar, wind and hydro generated power," said **Wise County Industrial Development Supervisor Brian Falin**. "This

award is an excellent opportunity for us to show our citizens, businesses, and industry that our goal is to provide the tools and support they need to invest in solar power."

Wise County first received the SolSmart Silver designation in 2019, and due to its additional accomplishments the county has now leveled up to SolSmart Gold. To achieve the SolSmart Gold designation Wise County established a permit turnaround time of three days or less for small rooftop solar projects, began offering appointments for inspections and created a [solar resource webpage](#) for the county—just to name a few accomplishments.

"We are thrilled to congratulate Wise County for achieving the highest level of SolSmart designation," said **Theresa Perry, Program Director for SolSmart at the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC)**. "This achievement shows that Wise County is on the path to robust solar energy growth, as exemplified by the Mineral Gap Solar Project. We encourage other communities to join SolSmart and help both residents and businesses access clean, affordable energy from the sun."

"Over the years Wise County has been a tremendous partner for us at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and now given our collective focus on improving communities through energy transition initiatives, we couldn't be more pleased with this important designation," said **Executive Director of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at UVA**. "I am confident that this will serve as model for other localities across the Commonwealth to follow and am excited to see how this work will serve as a springboard for additional innovative forms of economic and energy development moving forward."

SolSmart is led by the IREC and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. Designees help solar companies greatly reduce the cost of installations and the cost passed on to the consumers. It also expands the solar option to more local homes and businesses. The end result is clean energy and local job creation.

Virginia communities interested in the SolSmart designation can find more information via the Virginia Energy [website](#). All municipalities, counties and regional organizations are eligible to join the SolSmart program.