**Florida approves TECO solar energy tariff, increasing access to green energy**

Dive Brief:

* Florida regulators [on Tuesday approved](http://www.psc.state.fl.us/Home/NewsLink?id=11737) Tampa Electric Company's (TECO) shared solar energy tariff, to help the investor-owned utility's customers transition to solar.
* The tariff would charge participants $0.063/kWh to develop and maintain a solar project, as opposed to paying the $0.05/kWh charge associated with traditional generation. The Florida Public Service Commission unanimously approved the order, following [staff recommendation on May 2](http://www.psc.state.fl.us/library/filings/2019/04076-2019/04076-2019.pdf).
* TECO has committed to a portfolio of 10 projects to add 600 MW of solar by 2021, which the utility claims would be the highest percentage of solar among Florida utilities. TECO customers would pay the approved tariff for 17.5 MW of 32 MW from Polk County's Lake Hancock solar facility, which began full operation April 25.

Dive Insight:

Florida has continued to encourage [utility-led development of solar resources](https://www.utilitydive.com/news/floridas-solar-turnaround-sparks-concerns-over-limits-on-community-project/554100/). This latest PSC order allows TECO to recover costs and pay for maintenance for a large solar array without impacting its broader customer base.

Under the shared solar tariff, TECO customers can select to source up to 95% of their power from solar energy instead of traditional generation. Participants would be avoiding the fuel cost component of their bills based on their consumption from solar: if a household opts for 25% solar, the charge for traditional generation would be applied to 75% of their bill.

While the fixed shared solar charge is currently higher than the fuel charge, customer rates could rise as fuel costs increase, which would lead to greater savings for customers enrolled in solar overtime.

"Natural gas has a volatile pricing history," Mark Ward, TECO's director of renewable energy, [told the Tampa Bay Times](https://www.tampabay.com/news/business/energy/TECO-prepares-to-open-solar-farm-in-Balm_170930337). "Even though the pricing is good right now, it could swing and swing drastically."

The tariff has drawn some criticism from solar advocates.

"Vote Solar continues to be concerned that the tariff may not increase solar energy, will not provide significant economic benefits to subscribers and fails to provide expanded access to all customers," the nonprofit's legal counsel, Marsha Rule, [wrote PSC staff in March](http://www.psc.state.fl.us/library/filings/2019/03217-2019/03217-2019.pdf).

Regulators ultimately agreed with staff that the tariff would benefit customers that cannot otherwise invest in solar energy.

"We found the option to be in the public interest because it expands access to solar for all," PSC Chairman Art Graham, R, said in a statement. "Customers can easily join and leave the program, and they benefit from the utility's cost of solar, which is lower than rooftop or smaller scale privately owned solar."

The tariff allows businesses, homeowners and renters to equally access solar power, bypassing concerns from hosting their own distributed solar system. TECO customers in multi-unit dwellings — renting or with roofs that are incompatible with solar installations — could access renewable energy.

from：<https://www.utilitydive.com/news/florida-approves-teco-solar-energy-tariff-increasing-access-to-green-energ/554819/>