

Welcome to Sandisfield

We are a rural town, with beautiful dark skies, clean air and water, and you can help keep it that way by following a few practices that involve lighting and energy use.

LIGHTING:

The International Dark Sky Association brochure

<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/grassroots-advocacy/resources/public-outreach-materials/>

has some great ideas for saving money, making your neighbors happy, allowing animals the ability to sleep, and improve your health. Some towns have bylaws that require new and renovated properties to use only fully shielded lighting; in Sandisfield we use education.

ENERGY:

If you are building or remodeling, it is best to orient your house so the long side and the most windows face south, rather than facing the street, and site it with exposure to the low winter sun. Some east windows are ok but minimize west and north facing windows. This will help bring in solar heating in the winter and limit it in the summer, and reduce heat loss in winter. Just setting up your house this way can cut heating and cooling bills significantly, often meaning half or less of the fuel or wood needed.

Did you know that there are many innovative ways to heat your home more affordably than relying entirely on oil or gas/propane furnaces or woodstoves? In addition, while geothermal

energy (with a heat pump, deep drilling, etc.) can cost a lot, there are lower tech ways that are a lot less expensive, using underground tubing, air and fan instead.

<https://cerescann.com/ceres-gaht-system-versus-the-ceres-ecoloop/>

explains the concepts. This is a commercial site and we do not endorse any particular manufacturer, and the GAHT or climate battery system is explained in detail by many YouTube videos and articles on the web, mostly as used in greenhouses. Either of the systems greatly reduce the amount of other heating and cooling (electricity, oil, propane, wood), keeping our air cleaner. Putting in the system while excavating a site can make installation of the shallower GAHT tubing very affordable if there is over 4 feet of soil (ideally 8 feet) above any ledge.

Putting solar panels on your roof may cost nothing.

<https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/financing-navigator/option/power-purchase-agreement>

describes the process. There are Sandisfield homeowners who have solar panels without having had to purchase them. Instead, they pay the owner of the panels for electricity, usually at a lower rate than the utility's price. If you can afford to install solar panels, there are tax credits, rebates, and even payment for the energy you generate, in addition to much lower or zero electric bills. The system pays for itself much sooner (10 years more or less) than the lifetime of the panels.

Because roofs are typically hot surfaces while a field or forest is cool and stores carbon, rooftop solar makes even more sense than solar farms which replace cool carbon-rich vegetation with hot solar panels.

WILDLIFE:

Sandisfield is home to many kinds of animals, many of which are beneficial to us. Porcupines are said to eat many ticks and other pesty bugs, as do frogs and toads, and foxes will help reduce rodent populations (mice, voles, moles). Beavers create diverse ecosystems and while they can be a nuisance, wetlands laws help reduce conflicts from a home being too close to a wetland, pond, or stream. A single electric fence wire at waist to chest height will usually keep bears away from areas where you don't want them, such as in a fruit orchard or berry patch. However, bears or deer eating fallen fruit can reduce insect pest numbers.

BYLAWS:

To keep up on the latest bylaws, such as driveways, number of dwelling units, accessory buildings, and what you can do by right and for what activities you need a special permit, visit the town website <https://www.sandisfieldma.gov/home/files/town-sandisfield-zoning-bylaw>

These should be updated periodically.