

Benjamin Walton
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Internship Writeup

I started at SEA in the October that followed my graduation from UMass Amherst. There I studied political science, environmental economics, and energy policy, as well as worked in two history archives. Based on my experience at school, I felt SEA had a lot to offer me, especially after talking to Jake, recently my classmate, about the company. I was correct in that assumption.

The bulk of the work I have done during my internship has been for the Eyes & Ears and Solar Market Study subscription services. Through this work I have developed my research, my technical reading and technical writing, as well as data management, analysis, economics, and Excel skills I have needed for my work on SMS.

Much of my work has been with the SMS team. I was first introduced to the team to help with the SMS consolidated database, which combines three major public databases to create a one-project-one-entry database of the entire project network in Massachusetts, both operational and in the pipeline. Those records feed into the pipeline supply model, which then feeds into the supply & demand model that is the core of the SMS analysis.

Consolidating the database itself is a data collection and data management job that requires flexibility in Excel and an ocean of patience. From the analysis of the consolidated database, I have also created content for Market Briefs and Market Fundamentals webinars and PowerPoints, including graphs, tables, and written analysis. In addition to the data work I've done in the consolidated database, I have also collected and managed retail rate data, REC price data, project cost data, and data from two surveys of Massachusetts solar developers (which I also helped design and administer).

In 2016, the SMS contract included Benchmarkings, small timely deliverables that are meant to be a dive into some specific part of the market. Over the time I worked on 2016 SMS, I became the overseer of the Benchmarkings, creating products (with guidance from the team), writing Introductory Readmes, and composing distribution emails to be sent to our subscribers. With Tom, I developed an interactive Incentive Comparison Tool benchmarking that subscribers specifically praised in their SMS subscriber surveys.

Over the course of my SMS work, I have become very capable in Excel, and concomitantly developed the economics that is the meat (tempeh) of our analysis. I have learned a lot about the regulatory regime and the market structure of the MA system, and the history of the relevant incentives, and how they interact with the broader system. With this foundation, I am now working with Ted and Jim on creating an excel model for the new MA Solar program. I am currently updating the SEA CREST model with inputs that map onto the new program, so that the CREST results can be entered in to the SMART program model that Ted is simultaneously developing. This requires a lot of careful re-coding and attention to detail as I adjust a crucial piece of our analysis, as well as enough knowledge about the markets to make coding judgement calls and certain intuitions. It is rewarding to be trusted with such a task, and fascinating to dive into the financial modeling that informs so much of what we do at SEA.

On the Eyes & Ears team, I have been the point person for Rhode Island content. Week to week, I track legislative and regulatory proceedings, fill the RI section with article placeholders, and write most of the stories. While not my primary focus, writing in E&E every week (and reading it) has helped me develop a strong regulatory background not just in Rhode Island but throughout New England. This background has helped me understand our analysis, and why we focus on what. It has vastly improved my ability to dig through regulatory proceedings and legal documents for information, and has helped me problem solve more broadly. And it has kept my writing chops up; even if it is mostly technical writing, I believe regular writing is a critical exercise in being human. Regularly writing helps me communicate more clearly; it helps me think more critically; and, of course, it helps me write better. The

qualitative skills that are fostered by just spending a small amount of time on Eyes and Ears each week cannot be understated, especially as the information in E&E crucially informs my ability to perform the quantitative analysis at all. And that last point speaks to what I think is the most interesting part about working at SEA: almost all of the work flows upward, ultimately informing the REMO analysis. The qualitative work informs the quantitative work, and the models built for MA matter for the entire New England market. The comprehensive, overlapping scopes of our projects is exciting and fulfilling.

The other jobs I have worked on include DTE, and Kingston Wind. For DTE, I analyzed installed projects and the project pipeline from New Jersey, in a similar way I do for the SMS analysis, and worked updating a powerpoint primer for the client. I have been doing document management and research for the Kingston Wind project. I have also attended two networking events and two conferences with SEA; two NECA young professionals' night, the March 2017 Raab Restructuring Roundtable, and the NECA Electricity 101 seminar. All four events were valuable to me, both to more intimately meet my coworkers, and to meet other market actors (many of whom are subscribers). The conferences were informative and engaging, and it has been fascinating to see the kinds of tensions we write about in E&E unfold in real time; solar vs utilities vs environmentalists, for example.

I enjoyed my internship with SEA and I am both thrilled and humbled to be continuing to work here. I appreciate that, even before I had talked to anybody about possibly extending my position, SEA was investing in me, my career, and my curiosities. I feel fostered here, and like I'm becoming a crucial part of a team that I deeply respect.

