

August 10, 2020

**VIA EMAIL**

Aida Camacho-Welch  
Secretary of the Board  
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities  
44 South Clinton Avenue, Suite 314  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

**Re: Comments on Program Year 1 Lessons Learned**

**In the Matter of the New Jersey  
Solar Energy Pilot Program**

**Docket No. QO18060646**

Dear Secretary Camacho-Welch,

On behalf United States Solar Corporation (“US Solar”), I respectfully submit the attached *Comments on Program Year 1 Lessons Learned* in response to the Board’s July 9, 2020 Request for Comments.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

s/ Ross Abbey

Ross Abbey  
United States Solar Corporation

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
BEFORE THE  
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Joseph L. Fiordaliso  
Mary-Anna Holden  
Dianne Solomon  
Upendra Chivukula  
Bob Gordon

President  
Commissioner  
Commissioner  
Commissioner  
Commissioner

In the Matter of the New Jersey  
Solar Energy Pilot Program

DOCKET NO. QO18060646

**COMMENTS ON DRAFT RULE**

US Solar is a community solar farm developer/owner/operator that has developed projects in multiple states, with over 65 MWs of community solar operational and subscribed to date. We participated in the New Jersey pilot program's Year 1 solicitation, and hope to also participate in the Year 2 solicitation.

We respectfully focus these comments on three areas of practical improvement that would allow the program to attract and support a broader array of project developers and project types.

**1. Re: Topic 2, Question 7: Please provide feedback on the process of submitting an Application**

Given the length and complexity of the project application form, the Board should implement an online application process that obviates the need for hardcopy submissions. If a participant still wants to submit a hardcopy application via US Mail, that should of course still be allowed. But the Program Year 1 requirement to submit five printed copies of each project application imposed a modest clerical burden on applicants that would likely be more burdensome in this second year, given the new Covid-19 pandemic.

**2. Re: Topic 2, Question 13: Please provide feedback on appendix C: Evaluation Criteria from the PY1 Application Form**

Dual agricultural use (DAU) solar projects sited on farmland should be allowed to earn the full 20 points for siting.<sup>1</sup> We thus propose and respectfully request that the Board modify the Siting portion of the Appendix C to read:

<p><b>Siting</b></p> <p>Higher preference: landfills, brownfields, areas of historic fill, rooftops, parking lots, parking decks, <u>dual agricultural use farmland</u></p> <p>Medium preference: canopies over impervious surfaces (e.g. walkway), areas designated in need of redevelopment</p> <p>No Points: preserved lands, wetlands, forested areas, farmland</p> <p>Bonus points for: landscaping, land enhancement, pollination support, stormwater management, soil conservation</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Max. possible bonus points: 5</p>
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By enabling and valuing DAU solar farms, a trend that is promoted by National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) and many state-based farm associations, the Board would allow the pilot program to deliver multiple benefits beyond those provided by traditional solar sited on a landfill or brownfield, including but not limited to:

- allowing New Jersey farm families to participate in the clean-energy transition in a way that helps improve and diversify their farm revenue;
- helping preserve the farmland against residential, commercial, and industrial development pressure, while allowing for continued agriculture both during the term of the solar project and after the solar project is decommissioned and removed from the farm parcel;
- supporting the local food economy, allowing commodity farmers to transition a portion of their land to producing vegetables, fruit, honey, meat, or beverages for the local market (e.g., farmers market, local restaurateurs, CSA boxes);
- allowing for the incorporation of organic farming practices, perineal crop systems, soil improvement and carbon sequestration, and habitat co-benefits for songbirds, gamebirds, and pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies; and
- improving the production of pollinator-dependent crops growing on surrounding farmland within a radius of 2 miles or more.

To support the inclusion of this new siting category into the pilot program, the Board would likely want to require applicants to submit additional relevant information (beyond a DAU-tailored site plan), such as a farm operating plan (e.g., livestock grazing plan) and partnership letters or affidavits.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes also referred to as “agrivoltaics”, dual agricultural use solar projects are designed and operated so that most or substantially all of the solar project’s acreage is used to produce an agricultural product for market, such fruit, vegetables, honey, or meat.

3. **Re: Topic 3, Question 15: The 45 applications granted conditional approval in PY1 represented 17 unique applicants. Should the Board consider limiting the number of applications that are submitted by a single developer, or limit the number of applications by a single developer that will be conditionally approved?**

Yes, for the current three-year pilot program, the Board should limit the number of MWs conditionally approved for each developer in PY2 and PY3. This will allow for a greater diversity of project developers and development and subscription approaches (enabling more program learning) and hedge against the risk of non-performance by one or more individual developers.

Sincerely,

s/ *Ross Abbey*

Ross Abbey  
Senior Development Specialist,  
United States Solar Corporation