



State of New Jersey

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Douglas H. Fisher
Chairman

June 20, 2022

Via Electronic Submission

Aida Camacho
Secretary of the Board
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Ave., 1st Floor
P.O. Box 350
Trenton, NJ 08625-0350

Re: In the Matter of Competitive Solar Incentive ("CSI") Program
Pursuant to P.L. 2021, C. 169
BPU Docket No. QO21101186

Dear Ms. Camacho:

On behalf of the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) please accept comments regarding the Staff Straw Proposal ("Proposal") for the design of the CSI Program. The SADC fully supports well-sited solar development consistent with Governor Murphy's commitment to 100% renewable energy by 2050 and the goals of the Solar Act of 2021 (P.L. 2021, c. 169).

P.L. 2021, c. 169 states that "a coordinated land use policy for grid supply solar siting is needed to affordably expand New Jersey's commitment to renewable energy while not compromising the State's commitment to preserving and protecting open space and farmland". The proposal seeks to address the legislative mandate to balance project affordability with resource protection by recommending the CSI program be structured into separate procurement categories, or tranches, with bids in each tranche ranked exclusively on price.

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Cost as the primary consideration creates an incentive to develop greenfield projects. It is therefore important that the proposal create both adequate incentives for development of preferred sites and appropriate constraints on the amount and location of greenfield development.

If satisfaction of market demand is permitted on greenfield sites, it would create a disincentive for the project innovation necessary to result in cost effective projects on preferred sites. The SADC believes the current 140 MW annual cap for the Basic Grid Supply tranch (>46% of the total annual proposed target procurements) would result in an excessive amount of greenfield development and create such a disincentive.

In addition to the size of the Basic Grid Supply tranch, the SADC believes additional consideration for the location of projects within this tranch should be made. Agricultural development area (ADA) designations could be utilized to bifurcate the Basic Grid Supply tranch and create a location factor to ensure protection of the state's most intact rural landscapes. This could allow greenfield projects outside of the ADA to compete first, and then if needed, enable a tranch for greenfield projects within the ADA. Such an approach would more robustly implement the intention of the enabling law which repeatedly calls for limiting loss of the state's best soils within designated ADAs.

Further, the proposal identifies a separate tranch for Net Metered Non-residential Projects above 5MW and notes the demonstrated demand for these projects experienced in the Transition Incentive program. Given the significant potential for these projects in the near term the SADC questions why the initial procurement target for Net Metered Non-residential Projects above 5 MW should not be increased beyond the 40MW contemplated.

Lastly, the proposal does not include a recommendation for special consideration, or incentive, for "dual-use solar" but it does contemplate allowing agrivoltaic projects to compete in the CSI program. Given we are in the preliminary stages of developing New Jersey's Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program under P.L. 2021, c. 170, the SADC finds it premature to entertain the inclusion of agrivoltaic projects in the CSI program until we further define these projects and understand the multitude of factors that will contribute to their cost competitiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or need anything further, then please contact me.

Sincerely,



Susan E. Payne
Executive Director

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c: Douglas H. Fisher, Secretary of Agriculture
Steven M. Bruder, SADC Supervising Planner
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