

Energy & Environment

- Article
- Comments

BPU Angles to Build Solar-Panel Array on Property DEP Is Trying to Protect

[Tom Johnson](#) | May 15, 2015

Agency's proposal runs counter to administration's Energy Master Plan to build large solar arrays on reclaimed polluted tract



At the same time that New Jersey is seeking to acquire the forested land next to the Six Flags Great Adventure Amusement Park as open space, another state agency has drafted proposals that would allow a huge solar farm to be built on the nearly 90-acre property.

The draft proposals by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities would waive certain technical requirements allowing the solar facility -- which would be one of the largest solar arrays in the state-- to move forward.

The project has generated considerable opposition from conservationists who oppose plans to cut down an estimated 18,000 trees to clear the way for a 21.9-megawatt solar farm on environmentally sensitive land on the edge of the Pinelands.

Earlier this month, the state Department of Environmental Protection [wrote a letter to Six Flags](#) offering to buy the parcel, saying it conflicts with state goals to steer large solar projects to brownfields and properly closed garbage dumps instead of open space. Six Flags has not yet responded to the request.

The DEP's comments align with the Christie administration's Energy Master Plan, which aims to divert massive solar projects away from open spaces and farmland to property that has primarily been left fallow because of past pollution. That contamination has been cleaned up but no economic activity is occurring.

In proposals drafted by the BPU, the agency would grant the developer of the project, KDC Solar, a waiver from net-metering connections, a system that provides information on how much electricity is produced by the solar arrays, and how much is shunted to the power grid when the park is closed.

Related Stories



[DEP Offers to Purchase Endangered Forest Next to Six Flags Amusement Park](#)



[Environmentalists File Suit In Attempt to Stop Six Flags From Clear-Cutting 90 Acres](#)

The developer also balked at a proposal to initiate efforts to reduce energy consumption at the park, a measure the BPU believed could reduce the size of the solar facility. A hired by the developer said this idea would not be cost-effective and could affect the safety of those who use the rides at the amusement park.

“The problems with the Six Flags solar project are more than environmental,” said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. “It not only violates nature, but also many BPU regulations and orders.”

Instead of clearing the land of trees on property that drains into key watersheds, critics say the project should put the solar systems above the facility's 100-acre parking lot -- a proposition considered and rejected by Six Flags as too expensive and a potential safety problem for its customers.

The proposed project led environmental groups to [file a lawsuit](#) seeking to block the project. They echo concerns of the Christie administration that such projects should not be built on environmentally sensitive land.

Six Flags said the solar project will significantly reduce the use of harmful fossil fuels and includes the planting of 26,000 trees, according to Kristin Siebeniecher, a communications manager for the company.

The BPU has not publicized the draft orders, but they are on its website. The agency does not comment on matters pending before the board.

Copyright 2014 NJ Spotlight