



MCPB Item #___

Date: 3 / 5 / 2015

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 20, 2015

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MFR*
Mitra Pedoeem, Deputy Director, Administration *Mitra Pedoeem*
John Nissel, Deputy Director of Operations
Dr. John E. Hench, Ph.D., Chief, Park Planning & Stewardship Division (PPSD) *Jehench*

FROM: Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning (PPSD) *Brooke Farquhar*
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James Poore, Chief, Facilities Management Division

SUBJECT: Department of Parks Solar Initiative- Proposed Solar Arrays at South Germantown Recreation Park and Rock Creek Regional Park

Recommended Action

The Department of Parks seeks approval from the Planning Board for the placement of the Commission's first solar arrays in Montgomery County at the following sites:

- South Germantown Recreational Park in a field west of the maintenance facility
- Rock Creek Regional Park east of Needwood Road and immediately south of the Inter-County Connector.

If the Planning Board approves these sites for solar arrays, Facilities Management will coordinate a Request for Proposal and Power Purchase Agreement with an expected installation of late fall 2015 for an operation period of 15-20 years.

Background

This recommendation is the culmination of a 10 month investigatory study involving staff from Park Planning and Stewardship, Horticulture Forestry and Environmental Education, Park Development, Northern and Southern Region staff and the Facilities Management. Departmental staff was tasked by Director Riley with developing a plan to effectively utilize solar technology. The key goals of this anticipated project are to reduce the Commission's energy cost and carbon footprint and actualize

innovative, clean and renewable energy solutions that aid in the development of local emerging markets.

Staff contacted current solar users from both public and private sectors, conducted site visits and worked closely with our energy consultant, CQI Associates to survey the benefits and costs of various technologies in use around the region. Analysis determined the benefits of a Power Purchase Agreement using a net metering arrangement are significant with the most viable option at this time being a 15-20 year Power Purchase Agreement using systems capable of producing 2 megawatts of electricity per year in the PEPCO and Potomac Edison Utility Service Areas. Positive economic implications and expiring Federal tax credits have placed ground installation as the top priority over alternatives including parking lot canopies, roof top arrays, and embedded paving options.

Locally, numerous municipalities have implemented solar arrays including the Town of Poolesville, the City of Frederick, and the Prince George's County Brown Station Road Sanitary Landfill.

M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks is eager to grab the reins, actualize benefits, and explore future innovative solutions to our energy demands



Above - Typical Ground Mounted Solar Panel Array (Town of Poolesville, Maryland. 2014)

Solar Energy Benefits include:

- The Sun provides a free and limitless energy source (In 14 seconds the Sun provides as much energy to the earth as humanity uses in day)
- Reduce M-NCPPC's carbon footprint, dependence on foreign oil and reliance on environmentally damaging extractive techniques for coal, oil and gas
- Solar panels are quiet, easily maintained and produce no harmful emissions
- Solar Energy Generation has a proven return on investment with global positive market expansion
- Fixed unit price for generated solar energy for long-term budget stability- anticipated to offset M-NCPPC energy consumption costs, saving \$290,000 annually
- Consistent with Parks Mission and Montgomery County's Energy initiatives and carbon reduction goals

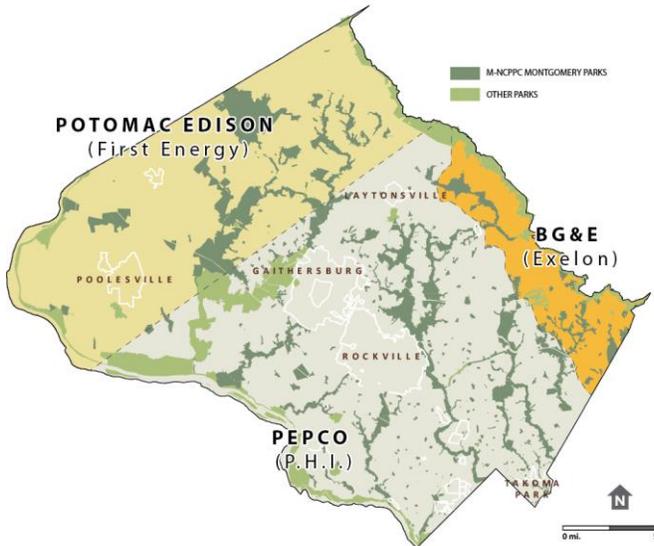
Further explanation of solar energy generation and terminology is found in ***Attachment 1***.



Above - Ground mounted solar array, Dover Delaware

Site Selection Process

Site selection for a suitable park site for an approximate 5-10 acre solar array in both the PEPCO and Potomac Edison utility service areas involved the use of Geographic Information Systems, ground truthing and numerous discussions with park managers and subject matter experts.



Above - Electric Utility Service Areas in Montgomery County, MD

This site selection study was particularly illustrative of the notion that parks are many things to many people and that despite having over 36,000 acres of M-NCPPC parkland in Montgomery County, precious little acreage is unspoken for in terms of existing public use and benefit.

Proposed Sites

Two sites are proposed for installation of solar arrays, South Germantown Recreational and Rock Creek Regional Parks.

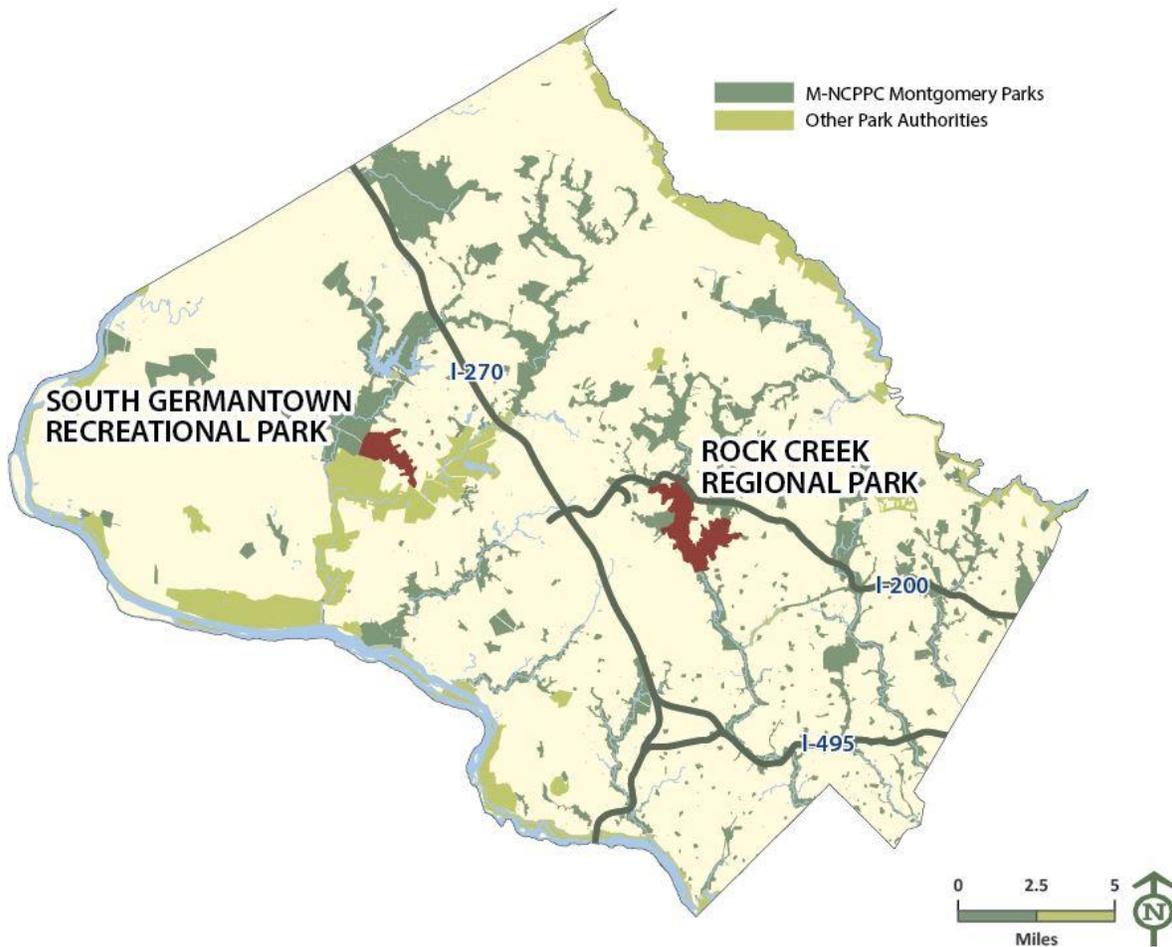
Staff evaluated approximately 135 park owned properties from an inventory of more than 400 parks. Sites that would displace existing or future planned uses, clear forest, or impact sensitive buffer areas were excluded. Conservation Parks, stream valley parks and neighborhood parks were largely excluded from site selection review. Thirty-five “finalists” were further analyzed.

For a list of additional finalist sites considered, see **Attachment 2 Solar Farm Site Selection Matrix: Park Properties in M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks**.

Criteria used and where appropriate ranked and scored as part of the site selection included:

- M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks owned property
- Installation of a solar array would not involve forest clearing
- Installation of a solar array doesn’t impact environmental buffer or sensitive resources
- Minimum area and adequate buffer to adjacent uses. (5-10 acres)
- Master Plan compliant and compatible with adjacent properties

- Installation of a solar array doesn't eliminate current or planned park amenity
- Compatible with existing uses
- Site is of limited resource, aesthetic or recreation benefit
- Project doesn't impact historic and/or cultural elements
- Not within Special Protection or Primary Management Areas or Biodiversity or Best Natural Areas
- Proximity to electric meter
- Good solar aspect, limited shading, and other appropriate site conditions
- Ease of Implementation

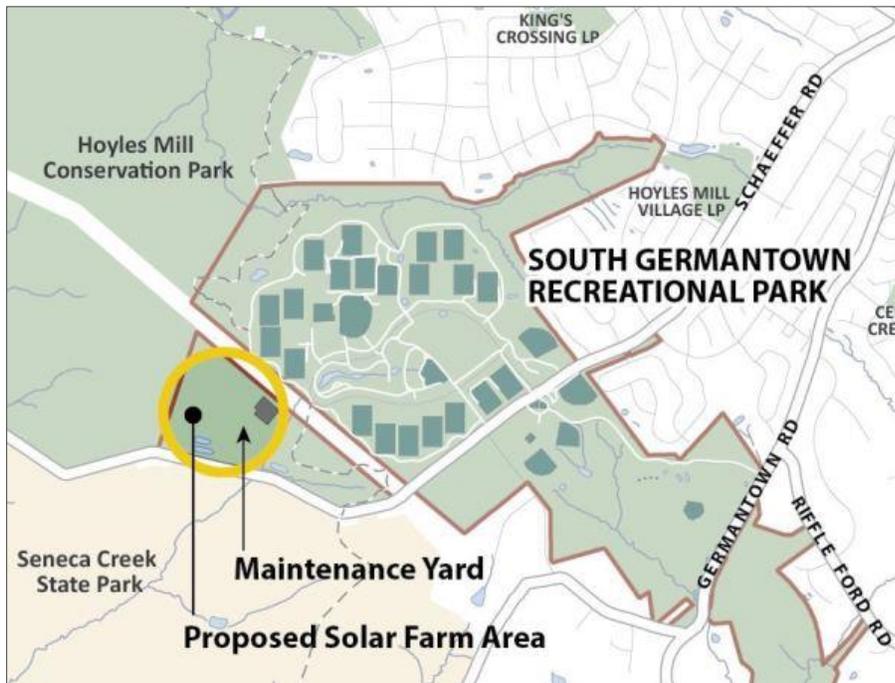


Above - Proposed Solar Farms Sites

South Germantown Recreational Park

The proposed area for a solar array at South Germantown Recreational Park (SGRP) is in a field west of the Maintenance Facility and adjacent to high voltage power transmission lines. Currently under an agricultural lease for hay production, this field is visually removed from adjacent properties and the perimeter park road. Rationale for selection includes:

- Scores high on Site Selection Matrix
- Synergy with Maintenance Yard from an aesthetic and similar use standpoint
- Extension of developed area of SGRP
- Solar arrays in this destination park could be used as a platform for teaching and demonstration purposes of alternative energy.
- Doesn't conflict with current or anticipated recreation uses of SGRP.

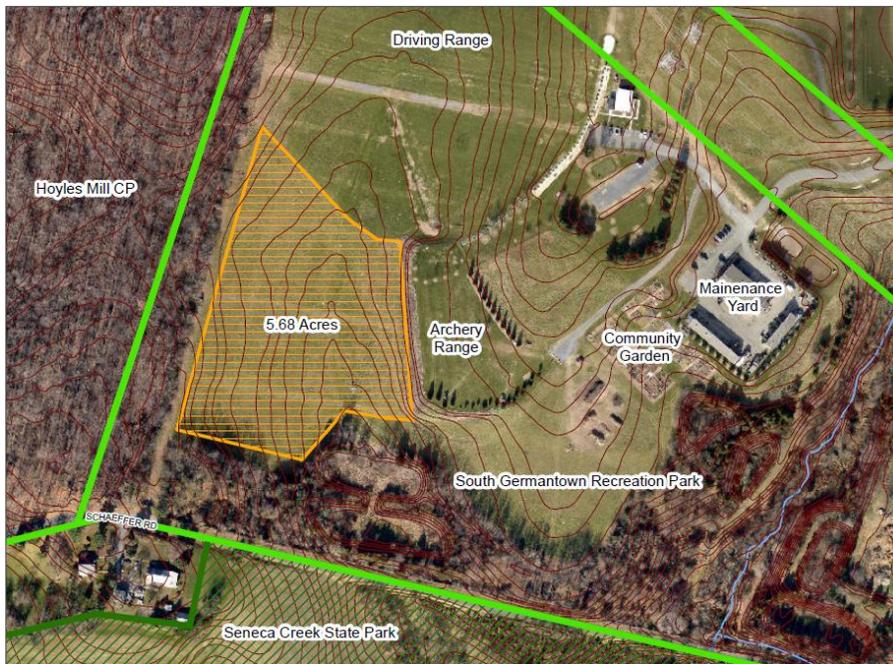


Above - Proposed Site for Solar Array at South Germantown Recreational Park

Given the investments of this recreational park as a regional destination that will likely accommodate future expanded recreational activities, any Power Purchase Agreement for this site will include an opt-out option, should M-NCPPC need to retain complete control of the proposed area.



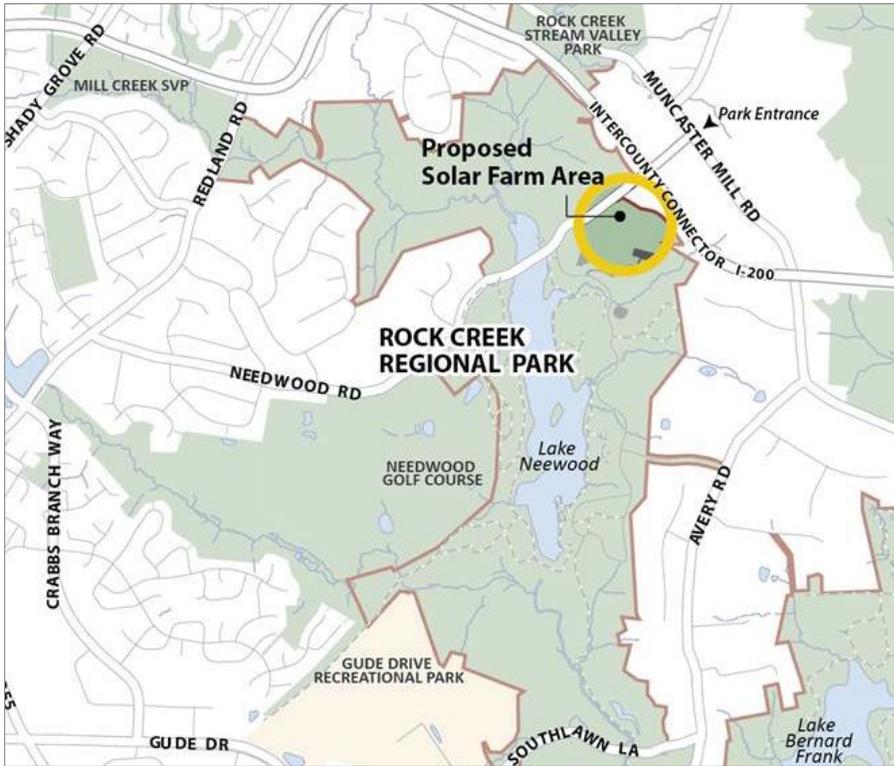
Above - South Germantown Recreational Park- proposed solar array site. Note High Voltage Power lines in background



Above - Proposed Site for Solar Array at South Germantown Recreational Park

Rock Creek Regional Park

The proposed area for a solar array in Rock Creek Regional Park is an approximate 7 acre area east of Needwood Road, directly south of the Inter County Connector on land used to stage and store sediment recently excavated from Lake Needwood. This area was part of a larger area purchased in August 2011 from the Maryland State Highway Administration (34.5 acres) specifically for the purpose of receiving dredge spoils. The land was added to Rock Creek Regional Park as a matter of adjacency.



Above - Proposed Site for Solar Array at Rock Creek Regional Park

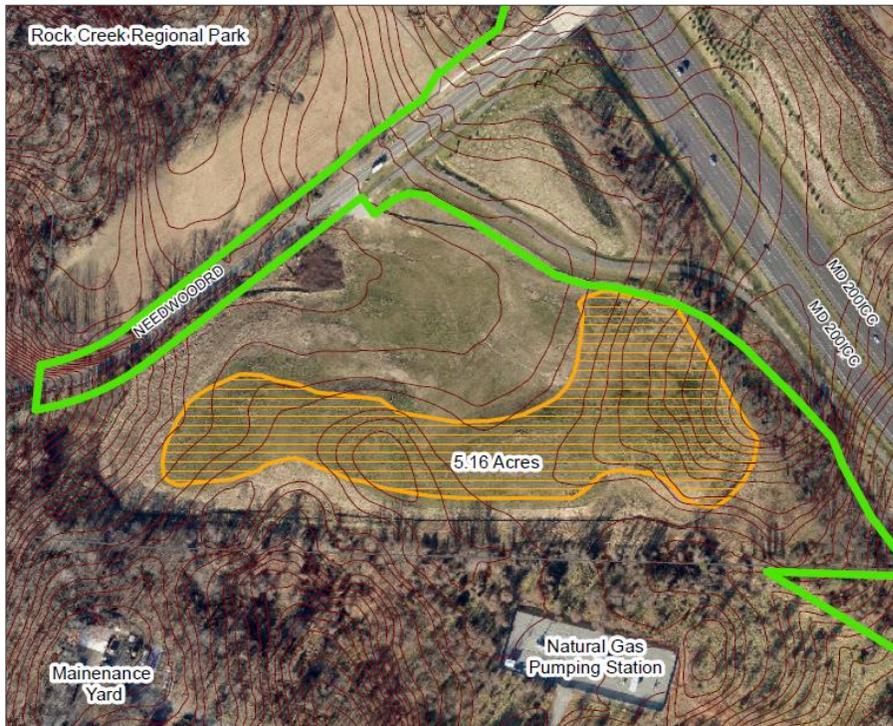
It is anticipated this area will receive future dredge spoils but not within the time period of the proposed Power Purchase Agreement for the solar array. Available and suitable area for a solar array is approximately 5-6 acres on fallow engineered slopes with moderate topography and no environmental constraints. Rationale for selection includes:

- Scored highest in Site Selection Matrix of all undeveloped sites considered
- No immediately adjacent residences
- Essentially a brownfield site where an interim use will synchronize well with future needs of the site in 20+ years for stockpiling future dredge spoils
- Synergy with adjacent Natural Gas Pumping Station and Rock Creek Maintenance Yard from a similar use standpoint
- Not currently appropriate for public use



Above - Rock Creek Regional Park- proposed solar array site. Note Needwood Road to the left and ICC overpass in background

Above - Proposed Rock Creek Regional Park Solar Array Site



Conclusion

In summary, Department of Parks' staff recommends pursuing a Power Purchase Agreement for a solar array at South Germantown Recreation Park and at Rock Creek Regional Park. These sites have no current or planned active or passive recreation and contain limited natural resources. Upon removal of the solar arrays it is anticipated that both sites will be planted in forest cover to augment adjacent forested parkland. If the Montgomery County Planning Board approves this proposal, construction and implementation is planned for December 2015.

This is currently an unfunded initiative, requiring third party investment. Our team will continue to vigorously explore other solar options and we plan to return with additional project initiatives in the very near future. Our site selection study made it clear that besides the 2 proposed sites, there are precious few other undeveloped sites in Commission ownership that Parks would consider for future ground arrays. As a result, the Parks Department envisions future usage of solar technologies with an emphasis on innovative systems such as photovoltaics embedded in parking surfaces, roads and trails, structured systems over existing Commission parking lots and structures, incorporation of solar photovoltaics in public art and inventive stand-alone systems.

"We are like tenant farmers chopping down the fence around our house for fuel when we should be using Nature's inexhaustible sources of energy- sun, wind and tide. I'd put my money on the Sun and solar energy. What a source of power."

- Thomas Alva Edison (inventor of the incandescent lightbulb and so much more) to Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone shortly before his death in 1931.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Solar Energy Generation: What and Why, and Energy 101

Attachment 2 - Site Selection Matrix: Park Properties in Montgomery County (M-NCPPC Park Planning and Stewardship) November 2014.

Cc:

Doug Ludwig, Chief, Northern Parks
Bill Tyler, Chief Southern Parks
Geoffrey Mason, Park Planning and Stewardship
Sabrina Pirtle, Park Police
Melissa Chotiner, Public Affairs and Community Partnerships
Kristi Williams, Chief, Public Affairs and Community Partnerships
Gwen Wright, Planning Director
John Carter, Chief Area 3

Attachment 1 - Solar Energy Generation: What and Why

Solar Energy Generation: What and Why

The use of solar energy has seen exponential increases in use in recent years due to 3 primary reasons:

- Improved technology and cost reductions
- Increased and unstable costs of fossil fuels
- Focus on clean, carbon neutral and environmental friendly energy sources.

Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Panels convert sunlight directly into electricity and have been in use for decades. A PV cell is a wafer of silicon sandwiched between two thin contact plates. The top contact is positively charged and the back contact plate is negatively charged. When sunlight strikes the solar panel, its energy knocks electrons loose creating usable energy current.

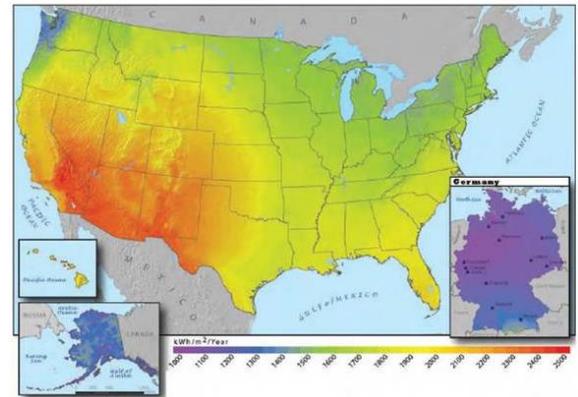
The first silicon solar cell, the precursor of all solar-powered devices, was built by Bell Laboratories in 1954. At the time, *The New York Times* proclaimed: "The beginning of a new era, leading eventually to the realization of one of mankind's most cherished dreams -- the harnessing of the almost limitless energy of the sun for the uses of civilization." The space industry was an early adopter of solar technology and as long pioneered and championed the use of solar technology.

About 38 percent of the greenhouse gases produced in the United States is the direct result of electricity generated primarily from coal fired power plants. Expanded use of solar energy can greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, airborne particulates and other pollution. In addition solar energy production doesn't involve the extraction, transport, power plant construction and burning of petro chemicals associated with conventional energy generation. All of the stages of traditional fossil fuel production have health and safety impacts to the public. A recent study identified 32 environmental impacts associated with energy generation. Relative to traditional power generation; solar power plants were beneficial or neutral in all categories (Brookhaven National Laboratory).

Demand for solar in the United States is at an all-time high (<http://energy.gov/articles/solar-demand>). Solar panel prices have fallen 80 percent in recent years, and by 2050, the US Dept. of Energy predicts the retail cost of solar electricity will drop by 65 percent. Total U.S. installations are expected to reach 4,000 megawatts in 2015. In California's Mojave Desert, the world's largest solar energy project is under construction and is expected to provide clean, renewable energy for 140,000 homes. In the last four years alone, the world has deployed more photovoltaic systems than over the past four decades with global capacity at 150 gigawatts.



Above: NASA solar powered satellite over the eastern U.S.



Above: Primed for Success: Almost the entire U.S. receives more insolation than Germany: the Current World Leader in Solar Power Generation (2012, Reuters)

Energy 101

Watts are a measurement of power, describing the rate at which electricity is being used at a specific moment. A 15-watt light bulb draws 15 watts of electricity at any moment when turned on.

Watt-hours are a measurement of energy used over time. A 15-watt light bulb draws 15 watts at any one moment, uses 15 watt-hours of electricity in the course of one hour.

Kilowatts and kilowatt-hours are useful for measuring amounts of electricity used by large appliances and by households. Kilowatt-hours are what show up on your electricity bill, describing how much electricity you have used. One kilowatt (kW) equals 1,000 watts, and one kilowatt-hour (kWh) is one hour of using electricity at a rate of 1,000 watts. New, energy-efficient refrigerators use about 300-400 kilowatt-hours per year. The typical American home uses about 7,200 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year.

Megawatts are used to measure the output of a power plant or the amount of electricity required by an entire city. One megawatt (MW) = 1,000 kilowatts = 1,000,000 watts. A typical coal power plant is about 600 MW in size.

Gigawatts measure the capacity of large power plants or of many plants. One gigawatt (GW) = 1,000 megawatts = 1 billion watts. In 2012, the total capacity of U.S. electricity generating plants was approximately 1,100 GW.

Terawatts are useful when going astronomical in scale – 173,000 terawatts of solar energy strikes the Earth continuously.

Attachment 2 - Solar Farm Site Selection Matrix: Park Properties in M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks

SCORING: No = 0 , Marginal = 1, Meets Criteria = 2-3, Exceeds Criteria = 4-5 Total Score: 25 and greater indicates Top Tier Sites; Sites shaded in Grey to be further researched .

PROPERTY	TARGET AREA	UTILITY SERVICE AREA	Impacts environmental buffer, high quality forest, steep slopes or erodible soils.	Site involves forest clearing or tree removal	Historic and/or Cultural elements	SPA or PMA	Ag Reserve	Ag Lease	Minimum area and adequate buffer to adjacent uses.	Master Plan and Adjacent Area Compatible	Doesn't eliminate needed or planned park amenity; compatible with existing uses.	Site is of limited resource, aesthetic or recreation benefit	Proximate to Power Grid	Good Solar Aspect, Limited shading, good site conditions	Ease of Implementation	Total Score	Comments
South Germantown Recreation Park-Surface Parking Lots	Over existing parking lots-potentially 24 acres	Potomac Edison	No Existing impervious area	No	No	No	Yes	No	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	30	<p>Synergistic benefits of mounted PV's include shading for automobiles and decreased thermal heating of exposed parking lots, and concurrent use, Highly visible area could be used as a platform for teaching and demonstration purposes of alternative energy production and provide good PR for the Commission.</p> <p>Minimal permitting required; no SWM required,</p> <p>Although building over parking lots might cost more in materials and construction and lengthen ROI time, it may be easier to implement and is more easily defensible when compared with undeveloped sites when considering M-NCPPC's parkland stewardship mandate.</p> <p>Ability to provide under mounted lights</p>
Rock Creek Regional Park	Adjacent to ICC, east of Needwood Road in open field- approx. 6 acres of available area	PEPCO	No	No	No	No	No	No	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	28	<p>This area of Rock Creek Regional Park is likely an easy sell to the Planning Board and adjacent resident (of which there are no immediately adjacent homes). The specific area in east of Needwood Road, directly south of the Inter County Connector and directly north of an area used to stage and store sediment recently excavated from Lake Needwood forebay. Available area for a solar array is approximately 5-6 acres in an open fallow field with moderate topography and no environmental constraints.</p> <p>One concern for this site is that by committing to a large solar array here for an extended period of time (10-20 years), the Commission would be removing a site that has significant potential for "Nuisance" Recreation- recreational activities that typically need a large buffer from residences. It is anticipated this area will be used to stockpile future dredge spoils but not within the time period of an anticipated Power Purchase Agreement</p>
Upper Rock Creek Local Park	Non SPA side	PEPCO	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	25	<p>Half of Upper Rock Creek LP being within the absolute headwaters of the Rock Creek SPA and the fact that it's under an ag. Lease</p>

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	of park																with the senescent corn acting as an attractive roadside amenity makes that site a bit harder to justify from a M-NCPPC standpoint.
Santini Road Local Park, Burtonsville	Northern area near previous residences	BGE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	25	Recently acquired as a local park with future intention of recreational improvements (ballfields) could conflict with a large solar array Not in CIP; disturbed areas in need of remediation
Little Bennett Regional Park Golf Course	15 ac, 14 ac, and 18 ac areas near maintenance yard	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	4	2	3	3	3	3	2	20	Current ag lease Prominent topography sloping North and Northwest Park Managers do not support a solar farm at Little Bennett Regional Park, finding the site unacceptable: This site is selected for the future Horse Trailer Parking Area. As part of the 2007 approved Master Plan for Little Bennett Regional Park, one of the goals was to move active areas that included vehicular traffic from the interior of the park to the perimeters. This was in concert to enhance our natural areas and keep park patrons safe from vehicular traffic. Moving the Horse Trailer Parking Area would remove traffic beyond the current Golf Course Maintenance Yard A Solar Farm would distract from the natural beauty of the park. The Master Plan opening sections states, "Development at Little Bennett should emphasize the park's natural features, beauty and tranquil environment while at the same time providing Montgomery County residents with a variety of recreation experiences oriented to this unique outdoor setting."
Fairland Rec Park	4 acres of combined surface parking	BGE	No	No	No	No	No		2	4	5	5	4	5	5	30	Synergistic benefits of mounted PV's include shading for automobiles and decreased thermal heating of exposed parking lots, and concurrent use, Highly visible area could be used as a platform for teaching and demonstration purposes of alternative energy production and provide good PR for the Commission. Minimal permitting required; no SWM required,

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																	Although building over parking lots might cost more in materials and construction and lengthen ROI time, it may be easier to implement and is more easily defensible when compared with undeveloped sites when considering M-NCPPC's parkland stewardship mandate. Ability to provide undermounted lights
Ridge Road	5 acres of combined surface parking	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No		2	4	5	5	4	5	5	30	Synergistic benefits of mounted PV's include shading for automobiles and decreased thermal heating of exposed parking lots, and concurrent use, Highly visible area could be used as a platform for teaching and demonstration purposes of alternative energy production and provide good PR for the Commission. Minimal permitting required; no SWM required, Although building over parking lots might cost more in materials and construction and lengthen ROI time, it may be easier to implement and is more easily defensible when compared with undeveloped sites when considering M-NCPPC's parkland stewardship mandate. Ability to provide undermounted lights
Black Hill Regional Park	2.5 acres of combined surface parking	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	No	2	4	5	5	4	4	5	29	Synergistic benefits of mounted PV's include shading for automobiles and decreased thermal heating of exposed parking lots, and concurrent use, Highly visible area could be used as a platform for teaching and demonstration purposes of alternative energy production and provide good PR for the Commission. Minimal permitting required; no SWM required, Although building over parking lots might cost more in materials and construction and lengthen ROI time, it may be easier to implement and is more easily defensible when compared with undeveloped sites when considering M-NCPPC's parkland stewardship mandate. Ability to provide undermounted lights

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Sugarland Special Park	Southern portion of park near Sugarland Road	Potomac Edison and PEPCO	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	5	1	5	2	4	5	3	25	Park has not been identified for any future public park uses Solar Farm would represent small portion of overall park area (approximately 8%) Minimal environmental constraints; open fields, hydrologic features easily avoided Potential MP conflict- nonagricultural use in the Agricultural Reserve, currently used for agricultural Production. David Scott is leasing 73 acres from the Commission via an Agricultural Property Lease (Cropping)- final year of first 5-year renewal that will expire on 12/31/14.
South Germantown Recreation Park behind Maint. Yard	Adjacent to archery range, approximate 15 acre area in ag. lease	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	4	3	3	2	4	3	4	23	Given the investments of this recreation park as a regional destination, it may be unwise to "lock" up such a large area within the park that could be used for a yet to identified future or expanded recreational activity If not used for active recreation, another ideal use from a park perspective of this area is reforestation to augment existing adjacent County and State parkland forest Synergy with Maintenance Yard Park Managers anticipate future expanded use of this area and believe it to be too close to the archery range and a bicycle pump track
Northwest Branch Recreation Park	Adjacent to trolley track alignment	PEPCO	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	2	3	2	2	3	4	2	18	Potential conflict with Trolley Museum in terms of environmental and cultural setting. Could complicate master plan vision for the park. Potential community opposition.
Muncaster Rec Park	Open field east of Woodfield	PEPCO	No	No	No	No	No	No	3	1	2	2	5	4	3	20	Within flight path of Air Park landing strip- glare associated with solar panels would not be supported by the Federal Aviation Administration Area may be needed for Pope Farm expansion of nursery

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	Drive																operations.
NW Branch SVU 7	NE of the Sandy Spring	PEPCO	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	4	3	3	2	2	5	3	22	Solar array may be conflict with trails and bucolic nature of the Underground Railroad Experience and the historic Sandy Spring and Quaker Meetinghouse.
Dry Seneca Creek SVU2	Open field area adj to Linday Property	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	2	2	2	2	1	3	1	13	Area is largely landlocked and not near grid connection
Boyds Local Park	Southern area of park	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	2	3	1	1	4	4	4	19	Potential conflicts with future development of local park amenities relative to collocating a solar array.
Hoyles Mill Conservation Park	19 acre area under ag lease	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	3	3	3	2	3	4	2	20	State purchased area for conservation- solar array would likely be a violation of recorded conservation easement
Ovid Hazen Wells Rec. Park	75 acre and 10 acre open field	Potomac Edison	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	21	Timing not good due to Ovid Hazen Wells Rec Master Plan nearing completion May limit agricultural expansion of Red Wiggler Partnership
Reddy Branch SVU3	Open fields NE of Olney Boys and Girls Club	PEPCO	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	21	Secluded site Access could be difficult Ideal use from a park perspective is likely reforestation to augment existing adjacent parkland forest
Little Bennett Regional Park	30 acres west of Rt 355, near Zeigler	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	4	1	3	2	4	3	2	19	Ag lease; other potential park uses

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	Log House																
Black Hill Regional Park	11 acre site on peninsula surrounding Chestnut Nursery	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	3	3	4	1	3	3	3	20	Should be reforested in support of water supply best management practices Solar array would be somewhat undersized here and could blight reservoir scenery
Black Hill Regional Park	8 acre site east of Clarksburg Road; west of reservoir	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	3	3	4	1	3	3	3	20	Should be reforested in conjunction with water supply best management practices.
Oak Ridge Conservation Park	Open Field areas- approximate 17 acres	Potomac Edison	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	4	2	3	1	5	4	3	21	Ag Lease Area very close to downtown Damascus Potential other park uses Potential community opposition LOS acquisition as a Natural Resources site Conservation Park
Sligo Creek Golf Course	Parallel to I-495 at northern edge of golf course	PEPCO	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	2	1	3	3	4	3	1	17	Would involve some tree clearing Panels would be visible from golf fairways. Area is somewhat visually and audibly impaired by the Capitol Beltway Invasive species common Potential complications coordinating with Revenue Authority Could involve fairway relocation