SITING OF LARGE-SCALE SOLAR PROJECTS TO REDUCE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON WATERS OF THE STATE

The WPCAG has been tasked to represent the WPC and the protection of water resources in the stakeholder process that DEEP will be carrying out in the near future. Below are items from the report of the Watershed Lands Group that have been combined and condensed to use as a starting point for discussion of a work plan.

Near Term Consensus Recommendations
Solar applications to the CSC should also be sent to the pertinent water company. This can be done by including the requirement in the CSC guidelines.
At BOTH the project selection and siting council application stages, the applicant should be required to indicate if the project is located on drinking water watershed source protection or aquifer protection land. This would not be burden on the applicant with the development of the Public Water Supply map on DPH's website.

Information Needs
Review current laws that may pertain to siting solar and green energy projects on watershed lands
Provide history of source water protection PA-85-279 et al per the 1980/81 drought

Considerations
It is important as we try to protect watershed lands that any changes do not limit the ability of a water company to install renewables on any water company land. The expectation is that any work would be completed in a way to continue to protect water supply.
Recognize that CSC and DEEP have overarching authority over the development of solar projects and that both pay particular attention to stormwater runoff
Consider areas that protect our drinking water quality as unique and irreplaceable
DEEP has added conditions to the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters from Construction Activities in order to reduce adverse impacts of large-scale solar arrays.

Recommendations
Update current laws, building on work from the past three decades
More consistent messaging to local land use boards on the importance of protecting drinking water watershed land
Establish state policies that recognize the critical importance of forest preservation to the protection of public water supplies. Forestlands are considered to be the most beneficial watershed land cover protecting drinking water sources, as noted by the American Water Works Association, the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities, and US Forest Service National Forest to Faucets partnership.

Promote renewable energy development to offset power demands of water and wastewater facilities.
Involve the public earlier and more effectively in the approval process
Review barriers to siting solar projects on disturbed sites, rooftops, brownfields, etc. and incentivize solar projects in those areas while providing disincentives for use of natural lands that are not compatible with solar array development, such as forests and wetlands
Promote renewable energy development to offset power demands of water and wastewater facilities.
Design incentives for brown field developments
Give municipalities the ability to have a preference/priority for solar siting in their community like they have with telecommunications projects. This would be a legislative change.
Review and rationalize the permitting process and flow chart from concept to lights on.