

## SOLAR ENERGY

# Landfill to become solar farm

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Approximately 70 acres of the 1E Landfill, which encompasses a total 400 acres spanning North Arlington and Kearny, could be equipped with 20 megawatts of solar arrays if a joint initiative between the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) and PSEG comes to fruition. It would be the largest solar power array constructed to date in the Meadowlands if the plan is approved by the state's Board of Public Utilities (BPU).

Besides benefitting PSEG with a renewable energy source to feed to customers through its grid, the NJMC would receive a lease payment from the utility, which would in turn be distributed on an annual basis to district municipalities in the form of grants. The lease payments would be fed into the Meadowlands Renewable Energy Fund (MREF), a program that would continue the previously administrated Municipal Assistance Program (MAP), which doled out \$10 million to the 14 district municipalities in its five-year tenure that ended in 2008. Unlike MAP however, where the grants could be used for an array of municipal upgrades (street resurfacing, curb and sidewalk replacements, ball field improvements), the MREF allocations would only enable a municipality to use grant funding for select sustainability, renewable energy and energy conservation projects.

"With MAP, you go buy a new police car and everything else," said Ceberio. "This programming, which is the renaming of an old program, is going to be specific to the municipalities for sustainability. If a municipality wanted to buy hybrids for instance, that's something they could do...if they want a \$90,000 grant to change out all their light bulbs so there is a decrease in their wattage usage."

Ceberio said the smallest changes can help a municipality reduce their energy costs significantly, referencing the NJMC's move last year to replace all the light bulbs in the commission's headquarters with higher efficiency bulbs. It's equated to 20-percent reduction in overall energy costs, or \$75,000 a year.

According to Ceberio, the process to get the ball rolling on a solar farm on the 1E could be lengthy. The two entities need first to file a joint application with the BPU, which may not occur until June, have the plan approved and then PSEG would have to begin its installation of the solar arrays on the landfill, which if everything is approved, could not begin until 2011. Ceberio said PSEG would

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need to absorb all costs of the project, including procuring and installing the solar panels, interconnecting to the grid and the space allotted on the landfill will be leased "as is", attributing factors such as landfill settling in the future that PSEG will need to adjust for. Ceberio said it's too early in the process to determine a lease amount for the property, but it would be based on a formula coinciding with current energy rates.

He pegged the figure at roughly \$1 million, but would like to see something closer to \$1.4 million so each of the district municipalities could receive \$100,000 annually, as was the case most often under MAP.

Rutherford Mayor John Hipp said the borough has been trying extensively to explore all alternatives of sustainability and a grant program that facilitates avenues to make those initiatives happen is just what local municipalities need. Rutherford has already realized significant savings by way of a hybrid police cruiser purchased last year,

a Toyota Highlander, which was purchased with a MAP grant.

"Rutherford is proud to be one of 34 communities that received certification by Sustainable Jersey last year and we believe this particular program, its ability to provide funding for grants for sustainable programs fits very nicely with the overall theme of solar generation and production in this region," said Hipp. "We applaud the commission and PSEG for bringing this about."

The concept of the PSEG-run solar farm is the latest in initiatives the NJMC has already put into

place to woo solar generation to the district. It has already outfitted its new education center's roof with panels and approved an agreement to build solar canopies over its parking lot and was awarded an \$8.5 million federal stimulus grant through the state's board of public utilities to construct a solar array on the 1A landfill in Kearny that would generate approximately three megawatts of power. That project is in contract negotiations now.

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