

HARFORD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

APPROVED MEETING SUMMARY – June 17th, 2025

Members Present

Jackie Koehn, Sally LaBarre, Roland Beckman, Michael Charlton, Dennis Kirkwood, Lynn Faulkner, Dan Spiker, Jackie Seneschal

Ex-officio Members Present

Adam Lanphear, Dan Furman, Jeff Schoenberger

Guests

Bob Sadzinski, Director, Power Plant Assessment Division, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Welcome / Introductions

Jackie Koehn welcomed the EAB. Everyone introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of the May 2025 Meeting Summary

The May 2025 meeting summary was approved as amended.

Presentation by Bob Sadzinski, Director, Power Plant Assessment Division, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Maryland Electricity Overview

- Maryland uses ~60 million MWh of electricity per year.
- 40% is imported from out of state.
- In-state energy sources:
 - Nuclear (Calvert Cliffs) – 41%
 - Natural Gas – 38%
 - Coal – 9%
 - Hydroelectric – 5%
 - Renewables (solar, wind, etc.) – 7%
- PJM is the regional grid operator.
- Maryland has ~80,000 solar facilities and 105 other generation sites.

PJM Generation by Source

- Natural Gas: 80,115 MW
- Coal: 50,689 MW
- Nuclear: 32,640 MW
- Others (oil, hydro, wind, solar, waste): ~21,000 MW combined

Electricity Pricing

- Based on generation, transmission, and distribution costs.
- Prices increase with more imports.

- PJM uses Locational Marginal Pricing (LMP), updated every 5 minutes.

Solar Energy and Agriculture

- Demand expected to rise 2.5% per year by 2030
- Goal: 6.5% of power from solar — Maryland is at 3.9%.
- Residential solar is up 88% since 2017.
- 2,355 MW of solar is online; 1,000 MW is permitted.
- MEA estimates 2% of ag land may be needed for solar.

CPCN (Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity)

- Required to build/modify large solar or transmission projects.
- Issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Before Applying for a CPCN

- Developers identify sites, contact landowners, and meet with counties and PPRP.

Solar Project Best Practices

- Avoiding wetlands, streams, and rare species.
- Minimizing forest clearing.
- Engaging with neighbors and communities early.
- Assessing site features like soil, groundwater, and stormwater.

Common Issues for Solar Developers

- Incomplete applications (PPRP provides a checklist).
- Delayed County review (should start early).
- Interconnection issues (submit early).

Role of PPRP

- Reviews environmental and community impacts.
- Analyzes ~70 factors (e.g., forests, historic sites, soil, equity).
- Make formal recommendations to the PSC.
- Manages the review timeline and participates in hearings.

Solar Performance & Trends

- Solar panels lose ~2% efficiency in year one, then 1% yearly.
- Old panels can be replaced with newer, more efficient ones.
- A 50 MW solar farm (250 acres) could power 11,000 homes annually.

Growth in Solar Projects

- Maryland is seen as solar-friendly with clear permitting and strong renewable goals.
- 38 projects are under review.
- Most delays come from local resistance or inconsistent county rules.

Challenges

- PSC Subscriber Application delays.
- Varying local requirements (buffers, setbacks, etc.).
- Local interconnection costs and timing.
- Limited direct local benefits.

Helpful Resources

- PPRP solar siting tool and pre-application checklist
- Website: <https://dnr.maryland.gov/pprp/Pages/default.aspx>

2025 Legislation

- Three major energy laws passed in 2025 (SB 931, SB 937, SB 909) impact permitting and planning but did not come with added funding or staff support.

Mr. Kirkwood asked if solar developers lease rooftops, and Mr. Sadzinski confirmed that they do. The EAB supported looking into rooftop solar on warehouses, chicken coops, and similar structures.

Ms. LaBarre noted that County and State solar regulations don't align and suggested the State provide a template for local legislation. Mr. Sadzinski added that three recent State bills were rushed and contain vague language.

The Board discussed how solar panels might affect soil. Some evidence shows soil damage, but it's unclear if the soil was already poor before installation. Cecil County requires soil testing during decommissioning, and the Board discussed testing before installation as well. There were also concerns about lead in solar panels and potential contamination from storm damage.

Mr. Spiker suggested focusing solar development in desert areas. The EAB agreed and supported using existing impervious surfaces for solar. Mr. Sadzinski said there are fewer applications on the Eastern Shore and more in Western Maryland. While farming is difficult there due to limestone, it's still possible to install solar panels.

The Board also discussed that many solar developers are younger and often don't have formal degrees but are backed by investors. Mr. Sadzinski mentioned the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) is researching planting under panels, but federal funding is being reduced. Another idea discussed was placing solar panels over wastewater ponds, which could also help control algae.

Conclusions

- Electricity usage in Maryland is projected to increase.
- Five acres (or 1 MW) of solar in Maryland can generate approximately 1,800 MWh of electricity per year.
- Solar panel technology and efficiency are improving rapidly.
- Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) targets are set by legislation.
- Maryland is currently about 600 MW short of its solar goal, but 851 MW of utility-scale solar is expected to come online by 2026.
- Additional changes and growth in utility-scale solar are anticipated.

Departmental Updates

Mr. Lanphear from the Health Department reported they have slowly opened the wet season well testing. They are monitoring wells weekly. The department also hosted a gun-safe handout.

Mr. Schoenberger from the Department of Public Works reported there was a Community Cleanup held at Riverside Elementary on 6/14/2025 with 3 roll-off loads, 6.65 tons trash, and 1.16 tons scrap metal. Aerated Static Pile equipment has been delivered and expected to begin operation by the end of month. They finished tree planting at Magnolia Middle School and Red Pump Elementary School. The Board of Estimates approved the construction of Watergate Stream Restoration.

Mr. Furman from Planning & Zoning reported that Shane Grimm is no longer serving as Director. Matt Kropp is currently serving as Acting Director. A search for a new director is ongoing and the job is posted. The nine amendments to the zoning map that were approved by the County Council as part of Comprehensive Rezoning will go into effect on June 23.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm.