CHEMUNG COUNTY STORMWATER COALITION

851 Chemung Street
Horseheads, New York 14845

July 3, 2019

Thomas Skebey, Director of Code Enforcement, Stormwater Management Officer
Town of Horseheads
150 Wygant Road
Horseheads, NY 14845

RE: Hickory Grove Road Solar Facility NY Horseheads I, LLC & NY Horseheads II, LLC, Horseheads (T), Chemung (Co) NY

Mr. Skebey,
I have completed a review of the following information for the project listed above regarding the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the project.

- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for Hickory Grove Road Solar Facility, Stamped by a Professional Engineer, Prepared by JHA Companies, Dated May 17, 2019 and Received May 31, 2019

- Updated Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Sheet, Received June 27, 2019

My review comments and questions regarding the SWPPP for this project, based on submitted information, are as follows.

1. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has put out a Memorandum for Solar Panel Construction Stormwater Permitting/SWPPP Guidance, dated April 5, 2018. This memo discusses the construction of Solar Projects in NYS and provides guidance on the Construction General Permit/SWPPP for this type of project.

   After reviewing this documentation and the SWPPP for this project, it appears that Solar Project 2 will need to abide by this guidance. The solar panels in a number of the Rows of Project 2 run perpendicular to the contour of the land. The slope in these rows is greater than 5% which means sheet flow cannot be maintained and these rows will be

prone to erosion. At the bottom of this slope are protected wetlands. Abiding by this guidance will protect the land from erosion as well as the natural resources in the area.

2. The staging/stockpiling/storage area is down slope from Hickory Grove Road. It may be beneficial to divert clean water around this area (on your own property) rather than let it run through and potentially mix with sediment and other pollutants.

3. Soil restoration is required and stated that it will occur. However, the erosion and sediment control plan C-2.02 does not show or detail where soil restoration is to occur. It would be ideal to show the know locations at this time.

4. A specific seed mix and fertilizer rate is not given for temporary or permanent seed. I see the detail sheets from the NYS Erosion and Sediment Control Standards and Specifications but nothing specific for the site. A specific rate and mix are required.

5. There is no mention of a concrete washout in the E&S notes or general notes on the plan. I only see the location and a detail on the plan sheets. It should be noted that one is being installed so the contractor abides by it.

6. The SWPPP states that once 70% vegetative cover is established that erosion and sediment control BMPs can be removed. In NYS, erosion and sediment control BMPs cannot be removed until 80% vegetative cover is achieved.

7. The Notice of Intent Question 9 needs to identify the National Wetlands as one of the nearest surface waterbodies that runoff could be discharged to.

8. The plan does not show or say which solar array detail is being utilized. There are two details provided. Please specify which solar array will be utilized.

9. A ***trained contractor*** must be on site during all earth disturbing and SWPPP implementation activities. Please see Part III.A.6 and Appendix A of the SPDES General Permit GP-0-15-002 for more information.

10. A **Qualified Professional** must inspect the site during construction. Refer to the SPDES General Permit GP-0-15-002 for more information.

11. This review pertains to the stormwater management. The applicant will be responsible for obtaining all necessary approvals from the Town of Horseheads. Also, a driveway permit would be required from the Chemung County Department of Public Works.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jessica Verrigni

Jessica Verrigni, CPESC, CPSWQ

Cc- J. Burdett, JHA Companies
J. Carl, Chemung County Stormwater
A. Avery, Chemung County Department of Public Works

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Regional Water Engineers

FROM: Robert Wither, Chief, South Permit Section

SUBJECT: Solar Panel Construction Stormwater Permitting/SWPPP Guidance

DATE: April 5, 2018

Issue

The Department is seeing an increase in the number of solar panel construction projects across New York State. This has resulted in an increase in the number of questions on Construction General Permit (CGP) and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) requirements from design professionals because the current CGP (GP-0-15-002) does not include a specific reference to the SWPPP requirements for solar panel projects in Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix B. To address this issue, the Division of Water (DOW) has developed the following guidance on CGP/SWPPP requirements for the different types of solar panel projects.

Scenario 1

The DOW considers solar panel projects designed and constructed in accordance with the following criteria to be a "*Land clearing and grading for the purposes of creating vegetated open space (i.e. recreational parks, lawns, meadows, fields)*" type project as listed in Table 1, Appendix B of the CGP. Therefore, the SWPPP for this type of project will typically just need to address erosion and sediment controls.

1. Solar panels are constructed on post or rack systems and elevated off the ground surface,
2. The panels are spaced apart so that rain water can flow off the down gradient side of the panel and continue as sheet flow across the ground surface*,
3. For solar panels constructed on slopes, the individual rows of solar panels are generally installed along the contour so rain water sheet flows down slope*,
4. The ground surface below the panels consist of a well-established vegetative cover (see "Final Stabilization" definition in Appendix A of the CGP),
5. The project does not include the construction of any traditional impervious areas (i.e. buildings, substation pads, gravel access roads or parking areas, etc.),
6. Construction of the solar panels will not alter the hydrology from pre-to post development conditions (see Appendix A of the CGP, for definition of "Alter the hydrology…"). Note: The design professional shall perform the necessary site assessment/hydrology analysis to make this determination.

*Refer to Maryland's "Stormwater Design Guidance- Solar Panel Installations" attached for guidance on panel installation.
**See notes below for additional criteria.

Scenario 2

If the design and construction of the solar panels meets all the criteria above, except for item 6, the project will fall under the "*All other construction activities that include the construction or reconstruction of impervious area or alter the hydrology from pre-to post development conditions, and are not listed in Table 1*" project type as listed in Table 2, Appendix B of the CGP. Therefore, the SWPPP for this type of project must address post-construction stormwater practices designed in accordance with the sizing criteria in Chapter 4 of the NYS Stormwater Management Design Manual, dated January 2015 (Note: Chapter 10 for projects in NYC EOH Watershed). The Water Quality Volume (WQv)/Runoff Reduction Volume (RRv) sizing criteria can be addressed by designing and constructing the solar panels in accordance with the criteria in items 1 – 4 above, however, the quantity control sizing criteria (Cpv, Qp and Qf) from Chapter 4 (or 10) of the Design Manual must still be addressed, unless one of the waiver criteria from Chapter 4 can be applied. **See notes below for additional criteria.

**** Notes**

- **Item 1:** For solar panel projects where the panels are mounted directly to the ground (i.e. no space below panel to allow for infiltration of runoff), the SWPPP must address post-construction stormwater management controls designed in accordance with the sizing criteria in Chapter 4 of the NYS Stormwater Management Design Manual, dated January 2015 (Note: Chapter 10 for projects in NYC EOH Watershed).

- **Item 5:** For solar panel projects that include the construction of traditional impervious areas (i.e. buildings, substation pads, gravel access roads or parking areas, etc.), the SWPPP must address post-construction stormwater management controls for those areas of the project. This applies to both Scenario 1 and 2 above.

cc: Carol Lamb-Lafay, BWP
Dave Gasper, BWP

Stormwater Design Guidance – Solar Panel Installations

Revisions to Maryland's stormwater management regulations in 2010 require that environmental site design (ESD) be used to the maximum extent practicable (MEP) to mimic natural hydrology, reduce runoff to reflect forested wooded conditions, and minimize the impact of land development on water resources. This applies to any residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional development where more than 5,000 square feet of land area is disturbed. Consequently, stormwater management must be addressed even when permeable features like solar panel installations exceed 5,000 square feet of land disturbance.

Depending on local soil conditions and proposed imperviousness, the amount of rainfall that stormwater requirements are based on varies from 1.0 to 2.6 inches. However, addressing stormwater management does not mean that structural or micro-scale practices must be constructed to capture and treat large volumes of runoff. Using nonstructural techniques like disconnecting impervious cover reduces runoff by promoting overland filtering and infiltration. Commonly used with smaller or narrower impervious areas like driveways or open roads, the Disconnection of Non-Rooftop Runoff technique (see pp. 5.61 to 5.65 of the **2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual**[1]) is a low cost alternative for treating runoff in situations like rows of solar panels.

When non-rooftop disconnection is used to treat runoff, the following factors should be considered:

- The vegetated area receiving runoff must be equal to or greater in length than the disconnected surface (e.g., width of the row of solar panels)
- Runoff must sheet flow onto and across vegetated areas to maintain the disconnection
- Disconnections should be located on gradual slopes (≤ 5%) to maintain sheetflow. Level spreaders, terraces, or berms may be used to maintain sheetflow conditions if the average slope is steeper than 5%. However, installations on slopes greater than 10% will require an engineered plan that ensures adequate treatment and the safe and non-erosive conveyance of runoff to the property line or downstream stormwater management practice.
- Disconnecting impervious surfaces works best in undisturbed soils. To minimize disturbance and compaction, construction vehicles and equipment should avoid areas used for disconnection during installation of the solar panels.
- Groundcover vegetation must be maintained in good condition in those areas receiving disconnected runoff. Typically this maintenance is no different than other lawn or landscaped areas. However, areas receiving runoff should be protected (e.g., planting shrubs or trees along the perimeter) from future compaction.

Depending on the layout and number of panels installed, the disconnection of non-rooftop runoff technique may address some or all of the stormwater management requirements for an individual project. Where the imperviousness is high or there is other infrastructure (e.g., access roads, transformers), additional runoff may need to be treated. In these situations, other ESD techniques or micro-scale practices may be needed to provide stormwater management for these features.

Example 1 – Using Non-Rooftop Disconnection Where the Average Slope ≤ 5%

Several rows of solar panels will be installed in an existing meadow. The soils within the meadow are hydrologic soil group (HSG) B and the average slope does not exceed 5%. Each row of panels is 10 feet wide and the distance between rows is 20 feet. The rows of solar panels will be installed according to Figure 1 below. In this scenario, the disconnection length is the same as the distance between rows (20 feet) and is greater than the width of each row (10 feet). Therefore, each row of panels is adequately disconnected and the runoff from 1.0 inch of rainfall is treated.

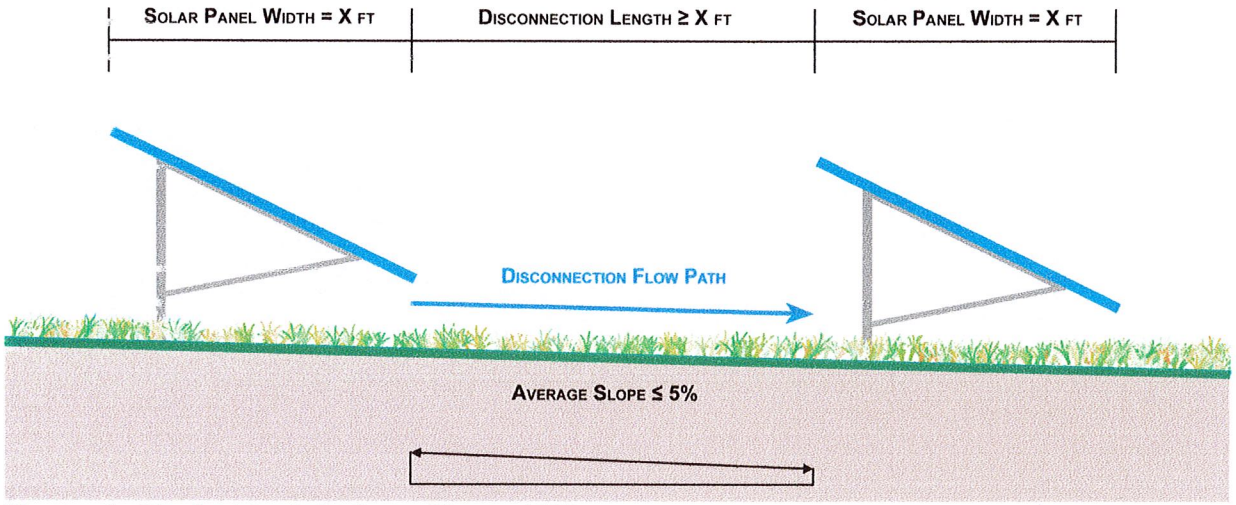

Figure 1. Typical Installation - Slope ≤ 5%

Example 2 – Using Non-Rooftop Disconnection Where the Average Slope ≥ 5% but ≤ 10%

Several rows of solar panels will be installed in an existing meadow. The soils within the meadow are hydrologic soil group (HSG) B and the average slope is greater than 5% but less than 10%. Each row of panels is 10 feet wide and the distance between rows is 20 feet. The rows of solar panels will be installed as shown in Figure 2 below. The disconnection length is the same as the distance between rows (20 feet) and is greater than the width of each row (10 feet). However, in this example, a level spreader (typically 1 to 2-foot wide and 1 foot deep) has been located at the drip edge of each row of panels to dissipate energy and maintain sheetflow.

Discussion

To meet State and local stormwater management requirements, ESD must be used to the MEP to reduce runoff to reflect forested conditions. While all reasonable options for implementing ESD must be investigated, minimally, the runoff from 1 inch of rainfall must be treated. In each of the examples above, there may be additional opportunities to implement ESD techniques or practices and reduce runoff that should be explored. However, simply disconnecting the runoff from the solar panel arrays captures and treats the runoff from 1.0 inch of rainfall. Where imperviousness is low and soil conditions less optimal (e.g., HSG C or D), this may be sufficient to completely address stormwater management requirements. In more dense applications or in sandy soils, additional stormwater management may be required.

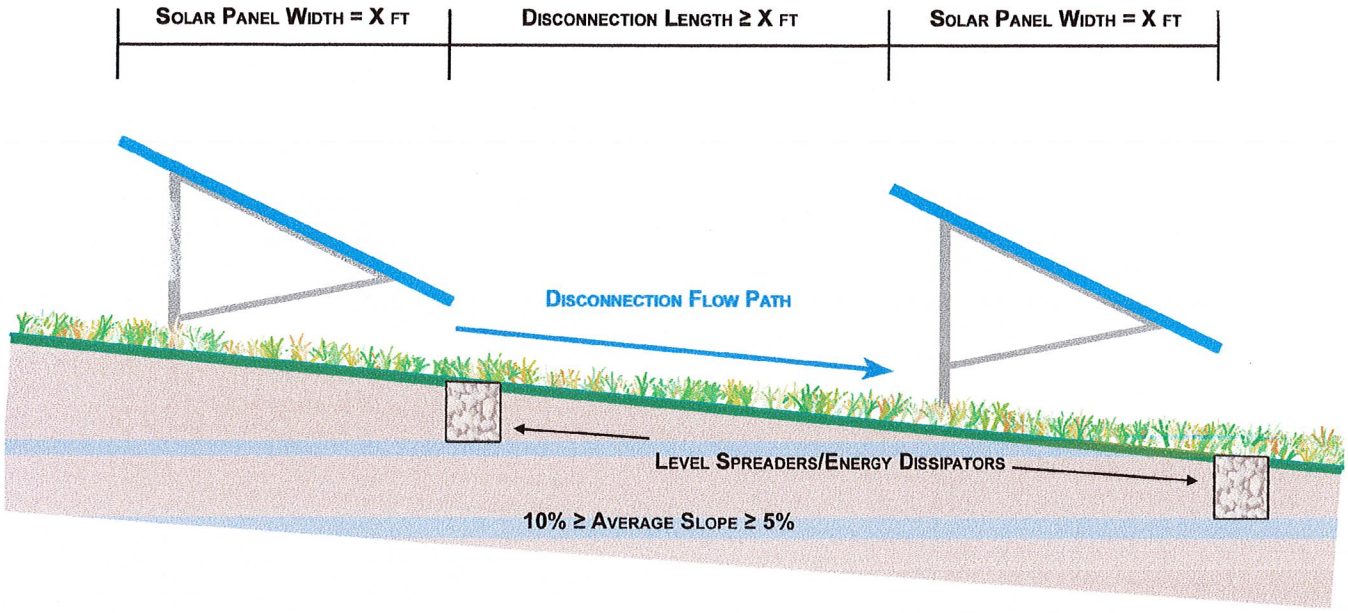

Figure 2. Typical Installation – Slope ≥ 5% but ≤ 10%

Conclusion

The primary purpose of Maryland's stormwater management program is to mimic natural hydrologic runoff characteristics and minimize the impact of land development on water resources. Any land development project that exceeds 5,000 square feet of disturbance, including solar panel projects, must address stormwater management. However, for solar panels, stormwater management may be provided in a cost-effective manner by disconnecting each row of panels and directing runoff over the vegetated areas between the individual rows.

Resources

[1] 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual, Volumes I and II, MDE, October 2000 (http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Water/StormwaterManagementProgram/MarylandStormwaterDesignManual/Pages/Programs/WaterPrograms/SedimentandStormwater/stormwater_design/index.aspx)