

PPRP Fact Sheet – Big Spring Solar, Washington County

PSC Case Number 9402

Manager: Fred Kelley

Last updated 22 August 2017

Project Overview:

Big Spring Solar, LLC (a subsidiary of Community Energy, LLC) has filed for a CPCN to construct and operate a 3.5 MW solar array in Washington County (Figure 1). The Project will occupy approximately 20 acres of a 182-acre property located 1.8 miles south of the town of Clear Spring. Project components include:

- 13,600 photovoltaic (PV) modules and a racking system;
- 4 power centers with DC to AC power inverters, medium voltage transformers, and associated equipment; and
- Associated interconnection equipment.

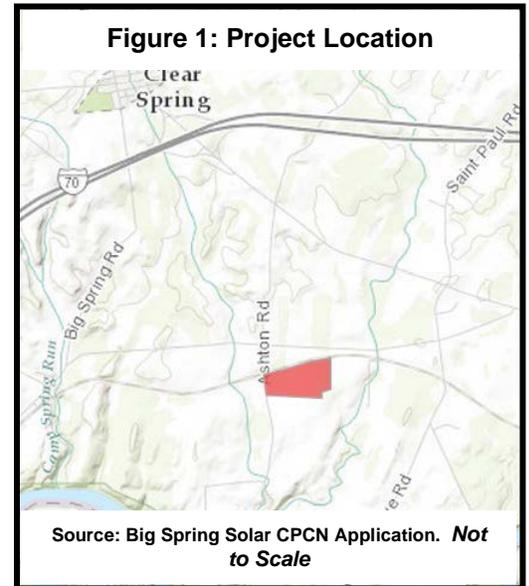


Figure 2: Aerial View of Project Site



Site Description

The Project will occupy approximately 20 acres of a 182-acre parcel. The Applicant has entered a long-term lease agreement with the land owner to construct and operate the Project. The Property contains a farm complex including an occupied residence, barns, silos, and storage buildings. The Project area currently consists of agricultural fields (Figure 2).

The parcel is zoned A(R)-Agricultural (Rural) and the entire Project area is classified as Prime Farmland. The Applicant applied to the Washington County Board of Zoning and was granted a special exception for the Project. Land use surrounding the Project is primarily agricultural fields with some residential properties located to the northwest, southwest and northeast.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Project area will develop only cleared land currently used for agriculture. PPRP has recommended that afforestation be required for this project as part of the CPCN, consistent with local ordinances and/or the DNR Forest Service evaluation of the appropriate type and amount of FCA mitigation required by Washington County.
- There are no records of rare, threatened or endangered species at the Property. PPRP has made the following recommendations with regard to providing for wildlife habitat as part of the Project:
 - Restrict mowing during the nesting season for ground-nesting birds (May-August);
 - Establish and maintain potential wildlife habitat following construction by planting areas around and between solar panels with warm-season grasses; and
 - Follow guidance from the Washington County Soil Conservation District to establish and maintain vegetation at the facility.
- There are no streams or wetlands within the Project area. A portion of the Project lies within a floodplain (though proposed 2016 revisions to floodplain maps show the Project is outside of all floodplains). PPRP has recommended a license condition requiring the Applicant to comply with all local, State, and Federal requirements for construction within a flood plain if the boundary does not change prior to construction.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Project is expected to create 25 temporary design, management, and construction jobs.

- Economic benefits to the State and county will be primarily in the form of corporate income taxes, income taxes from lease payments to landowner, and personal property tax revenues. PPRP estimates that business personal property taxes from the Project could be \$50,000 in the first year, declining to \$19,000 in Year 20.
- The Project will displace approximately 20 acres of agricultural land use, but will not affect land use on surrounding properties.

Transportation

- Construction worker traffic and truck traffic for delivery of equipment will not affect the level of service on roads near the Project.
- Some vehicles for equipment delivery may be oversize and/or overweight.
- There are two airports and two heliports within 25 miles of the Project, the nearest being Green Landing Airport, approximately 5 miles away. PPRP has concluded that the Project will not have an adverse effect upon air navigation.

Visual impacts

- Views of the Project from nearby properties are partially blocked by existing mature vegetation. A proposed vegetative buffer will further block views of the Project from adjacent properties.
- The Project will not create substantial light if its lighting plan satisfies Washington County's exterior lighting requirements.
- While the likelihood of glare trespass is minimal, PPRP recommends a license condition requiring the Applicant to document and address complaints related to potential solar reflections.

Cultural & Aesthetic

- There is one property on the National Register of Historic Places and several properties on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties located <1 mile from the Project. The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) has concluded that the Project will not adversely impact historical properties.
- Due to a boundary change in April 2017, the Project lies within a portion of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.
- The archeological potential of the Project area is low due to past agricultural activity.
- The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Scenic Byway bypasses the Project, but the Project will not affect its scenic value.
- Several bike routes use the same roads that will be used by construction traffic. PPRP has recommended a license condition to protect the safety of cyclists.

Other

- PPRP has recommended the following license conditions with regard to fire safety and emergency response for the Project:
 - Design, install, and maintain the Project in conformance with the guidelines of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidance NFPA 1 and NFPA 70; and
 - Contact local emergency responders to: establish points of contact, facilitate emergency vehicle access, create a protocol to identify system components requiring special attention during emergencies, and develop standard operating procedures for emergencies.
- The Project's operation will not emit significant traffic, noise, air or water pollutants, or generate any hazardous waste that could potentially affect public health. At the end of the facility's useful life, a decommissioning plan will return the Project site to its original state. Thus, the Project will minimally affect the local environment and is unlikely to affect property values.

CPCN Status

- CPCN Application filed on 10/28/15.
- A Notice of Procedural Schedule was filed on 11/30/15. This schedule was suspended on 2/29/16. A Schedule Order was reinstated on 2/22/17.
- Direct testimony was filed on 4/6/17 and 6/22/17. Rebuttal testimony was filed on 7/3/17.
- A public hearing was held on 7/12/17.
- For more current information, see: <http://www.psc.state.md.us/>

