

PPRP Fact Sheet – Biggs Ford Solar Project, Frederick County

PSC Case Number 9439

Manager: Bob Sadzinski

Last updated 29 August 2017

Project Overview:

Biggs Ford Solar Center, LLC (a subsidiary of Coronal Solar, LLC) has filed for a CPCN to construct and operate a 15 MW solar array in Frederick County (Figure 1). The Project will occupy 135 acres of a 151-acre parcel near the intersection of Biggs Ford Road and Dublin Road in Walkersville. Project components include:

- 61,000 photovoltaic (PV) modules and single-axis horizontal tracking racking system,
- DC to AC power inverters,
- Medium voltage transformers,
- Control & distribution cabinets,
- Medium voltage collection system,
- Project switchgear, and
- Other interconnection equipment.

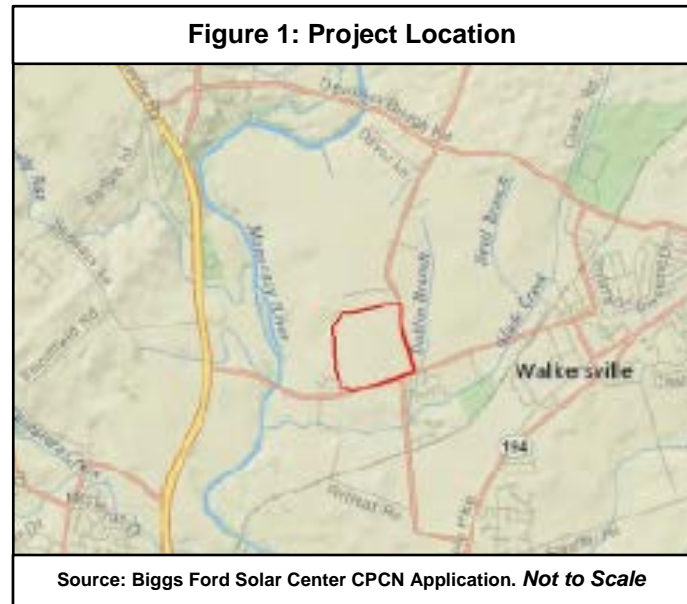


Figure 2: View of Project Site from Road



Site Description

The Property address is 8300 Biggs Ford Road, Walkersville, MD 21793. Biggs Ford Solar has entered into a long-term land lease option with the landowner. The Property currently contains agricultural fields and a residential farm complex (Figure 2). The proposed layout for the Project does not include any disturbance of the structures associated with the residential farm complex. The Project site is located in a rural area surrounded by a mixture of agricultural and residential land.

The Property is zoned A (Agricultural District) and all mapped soils at the Property are classified as Prime Farmland. Utility scale solar is not a permitted land use in Zone A. In May 2017, Frederick County adopted Bill No. 17-07 concerning Solar Facilities and Floating Zone; the Biggs Ford Solar Project as currently proposed

does not meet the requirements specified in the newly enacted zoning rules. As of the date of this fact sheet, zoning concerns have not been resolved. For this reason, PPRP has filed testimony with the PSC on behalf of the State Agencies, recommending that the CPCN be denied.

Impact Assessment Highlights (based on Applicant's information)

Biological

- The Applicant plans to clear 1.5 acres of forested land and has committed to 3.0 acres of forest mitigation.
- There are no records of rare, threatened or endangered species at the Property.
- An unnamed tributary to the Monocacy River and a wetland area are present near the northwestern property boundary. The Project will observe a 50-ft and 25-ft setbacks from the stream and wetlands, respectively.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Project is expected to create 50-70 temporary design, management, and construction jobs.

- The estimated cost to construct the Project will be \$21 - \$24 million with a substantial portion of the capital investment remaining local, within Maryland.
- Economic benefits to the State and county will be primarily in the form of corporate income tax revenues.
- The Project will displace 135 acres of agricultural land use, but will not affect land use on surrounding properties.



Transportation

- During construction, equipment will be delivered by tractor trailer. Excavation and other heavy equipment that may be used may include front end loaders, dump trucks, excavators, trenching equipment and similar vehicles. Daily construction traffic will include pickup trucks and other personnel vehicles.
- After construction, traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for mowing and vegetation maintenance. Quarterly to yearly maintenance on the solar array and periodic site visits for operations issues may also occur.
- The most probable route for construction traffic will be State Highway I-70 and US-15 and one County Road (Biggs Ford Road).
- The nearest airport (Frederick Municipal Airport) is located approximately 4.4 aerial miles south of the Project. The Applicant has contacted the Federal Aviation Administration, Maryland Aviation Administration, and the airport and has received a determination of "No Hazard to Air Navigation."

Visual impacts

- In addition to existing landscape buffering, which will be maintained, the Applicant has proposed an enhanced landscape buffer within 300 feet of locations where the Property abuts residential structures. This will constitute approximately 3800 linear feet of screening around the Project.
- The Applicant used the Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool (SGHAT) to assess the potential for glare trespass onto adjacent properties and found no glare on any of the analyzed properties.

Cultural & Aesthetic

- There are no Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties listings on the Project site. The nearest listed property is the Biggs Ford Site, the boundary of which is approximately 400 feet southwest of the Project Property. The Biggs Ford Site is a large, well-preserved, multi-component Native American village site located on the Monocacy River.
- The Applicant submitted a Project Review Request to the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) in April 2016 and received a response with multiple recommendations in May 2016. A Phase I Archeological Survey was completed in February 2017 and submitted to MHT along with a Determination of Eligibility for the existing farmstead on the Project site (i.e., the Baker Farm). In April 2017, MHT responded that no further archeological investigations were required, but encouraged the Applicant to look for ways to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the Baker Farm.

Public Service impacts

- Water and sewer utilities will not be needed for the Project.
- The Applicant has stated that the Project will be designed in accordance with the State Fire Prevention Code, including coordination with local emergency responders regarding details of the Project's fire protection plan.

CPCN Status

- CPCN Application filed on 2/16/17.
- For more current information, see: <http://www.psc.state.md.us/>

