

Note:
This summary was last updated on
April 22, 2024.
For current information, follow this link:
[PSC Docket Case #9685](#)

Hidden Meadows Solar 5019 Sands Road, Lothian, Maryland 20711 (Anne Arundel County)

[PSC Case #9685](#)

PPRP Case Manager: Ginny Rogers

Note:
This summary is based on
information provided in the Revised
CPCN Application filed with the PSC
on **March 14, 2024**, which is subject
to change and has not yet been fully
reviewed by PPRP.

CPCN Timeline

Revised CPCN Application filed on March 14, 2024
Applicant's Filed Direct Testimony Due: June 26, 2024
1st Public Hearing (Virtual): July 9, 2024
Intervenors' Direct Testimony Due: September 10, 2024
2nd Public Hearing: September 16, 2024
Settlement Status Update: September 19, 2024
PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if uncontested): October 1, 2024
Rebuttal Testimony (if contested): October 17, 2024
PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if contested): October 31, 2024

Project Location:

The Hidden Meadows Solar Project (Project) will be located on a 71.13 acre parcel in Lothian, Maryland (Figure 1) in Anne Arundel County. [Google Map Link](#). Per the Applicant, the approximate Limit of Disturbance (LOD) for the project will be 26.37 acres.

Project Overview:

Community Power Group, LLC (Applicant) has applied for a CPCN to construct a 5.0 MW AC solar array in Anne Arundel County.

Project components include:

- 11,111 photovoltaic (PV) modules ground-mounted on a single-axis tracking rack system;
- Interconnection equipment: attachment facilities as necessary to connect to existing 33 kV Feeder line to Marriott Hill Substation along Sands Road;
- 40 string inverters; and
- Two transformers on site.

Site Description

The parcel that comprises the Project site mainly consists of vacant fallow agricultural land containing barn ruins and remnants of an animal shelter. The project site was formerly part of a pig farm until 2019. The Applicant's Environmental Review Document (ERD) states that the parcel is zoned RA- rural agriculture and approximately 25 acres of prime farmland will be affected by the project. The project site is surrounded by forest conservation easements on all sides, except for the northern boundary. Solar facilities are permitted in Anne Arundel County under a special exemption use. On April 4, 2024 Anne Arundel County filed a petition to intervene in PSC Case 9685.

The Project is a Community Solar Energy Generating System and will deliver all of its output to subscribers via the Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) electric distribution grid. At the time of the CPCN Application submittal, the Applicant was approved as a subscriber organization by the PSC for 5MW AC and BGE conditionally approved the Applicant's interconnection application.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Applicant's ERD states the site contains wetland areas and an unnamed tributary to Wilson Owens Branch, which is a tributary to the Patuxent Scenic River. Some of these wetland areas were likely created in the uplands as hog wallows. The Applicant states that the Project will limit disturbance to the wetlands to the maximum extent possible. The Applicant also states that no adverse impacts to the Scenic River are anticipated.
- The Applicant is estimating 90 square feet of permanent wetland impacts and 2,210 square feet of permanent buffer impacts. The Applicant will file a Joint Permit Application (JPA) with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to determine what permits and conditions will be required for wetland and wetland buffer impacts.

Figure 1. Project Location



Source: March 14, 2024 CPCN Application

- The Applicant's preliminary concept plans show a 25-foot wetland buffer and a 100-foot stream buffer around the delineated resources.
- The property is within the Wilson Owens Branch Tier II High Quality Waters Catchment. MDE determined that the Project will have minimal effects on the Tier II stream segment and will not require additional Tier II Antidegradation Review unless there are major modifications to the project.
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service (DNR-WHS), and DNR-WHS determined that there are no official records for State or Federal listed candidate, proposed, or rare plant or animal species within the project area. The DNR-WHS also mentioned that the forested area on the property contains Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Habitat.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified potential habitat on the site for the Federally endangered Northern Long-eared Bat and the Federal candidate Monarch Butterfly.
- The Applicant's ERD states approximately 11,400 square feet or 0.26 acres of forest will be removed for an access road, in accord with the existing Forest Conservation Plan. The rest of the forest cover on the property is protected by conservation easements under the Plan.

Noise Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that most noise generated from the electrical equipment on the project site will be from the transformer and inverters. The nearest residence will be more than 500 feet from the closest inverter.

Visual Impacts

- The Applicant proposes to enclose the Project with a 7-foot-tall security fence.
- The Applicant has proposed a 20-foot-wide landscape buffer to provide vegetative screening along the northern property boundary, where natural screening is not provided by existing forested area. The remainder of the Project's LOD is adjacent to forest conservation easements.

Cultural Resource Impacts

- The Applicant has corresponded with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) which has determined that the Project would have no adverse effects to architectural and archeological resources.

Public Safety and Transportation

- Andrews Air Force Base (AFB) is located approximately eleven miles from the project site.
- The Applicant states that there are no public or private airports located within 3 miles of the Project, with the nearest airport located approximately 15 miles west. The Applicant has corresponded with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) and has received a determination of No Hazards to Air Navigation from both Authorities.
- The Applicant has received consent from the adjoining property owner to utilize the existing access road that runs from Sands Road through the adjoining property towards the Project. The Applicant will also be constructing a new section of access road to connect with the Project. The Applicant has applied to Anne Arundel County for approval of a standard grading plan and grading permit to construct a new access road to the site.
- The Applicant's ERD states during the construction period, daily construction traffic will include cars, pickup trucks, and other personnel vehicles. Excavation and other equipment will be utilized during construction of the Project, which may include dump trucks, trenching equipment, concrete trucks, front loaders, backhoes, post installation equipment, excavators, and other equipment. There will be limited traffic to and from the solar array during operation. Traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for vegetation maintenance.
- The Applicant states the Project will be designed to allow for proper access of emergency and fire equipment to the inverters and transformer stations with width to accommodate emergency vehicles.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant estimates that the Project will create 30 direct and 60 indirect jobs during the construction period and 2 direct and 5 indirect operation and maintenance jobs post-construction.
- The Applicant indicates that the Project represents a capital investment of approximately \$5 million.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Avoided

- The Applicant indicates that the Project would reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in Maryland by approximately 8,031,069 lbs in the first year of production and 189,179,470 lbs over the life of the Project.