

Note:
This summary was last updated on **June 18, 2024**
For current information, follow this link:
[PSC Docket Case #9730](#)

**Bear Branch Solar
Littlestown Pike
Westminster, MD 08053 (Carroll County)**
[PSC Case #9730](#)
PPRP Case Manager: Chris Aadland

Note:
This summary is based on information provided in the CPCN Application filed with the PSC on **April 1, 2024**, which is subject to change and has not yet been fully reviewed by PPRP.

CPCN Timeline
CPCN Application filed on April 1, 2024
Applicant's Filed Direct Testimony Due: July 30, 2024
1st Public Hearing (Virtual): Week of August 20, 2024
Intervenors' Direct Testimony Due: November 22, 2024
2nd Public Hearing: Week of December 2, 2024
Settlement Status Update: December 5, 2024
PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if settlement is reached): December 17, 2024

Project Location:

The Bear Branch Solar Project (Project) will be located on a 65 acre parcel north of the City of Westminster, Maryland (Figure 1). [Google Map Link](#). Per the Applicant, the approximate limit of disturbance (LOD) for the Project will be 26.6 acres.

Project Overview:

Bear Branch Solar LLC (Applicant) has applied for a CPCN to construct a 4.0 MW AC solar array in Carroll County.

Project components include:

- 9,750 photovoltaic (PV) modules ground-mounted on a single-axis tracking rack system;
- Interconnection equipment: connection to existing 33 kV Feeder 33920 from White Rock Substation;
- 32 string inverters; and
- A medium voltage transformer.


Site Description

The parcel that comprises the Project site consists of a forest bank in a conservation easement and vacant agricultural land. The project will affect 21.44 acres of prime farmland. The land surrounding the site is primarily vacant agricultural land, except to the west where there is a large farm complex with multiple grain silos, a property management service, and a church. Beyond these developed areas is Littlestown Pike where there are some additional residences. The Project is in the County's Agricultural Zoning District and is no longer a permitted use under Carroll County's zoning ordinance as a result of the 2023 moratorium and zoning code revisions banning all solar projects in the agricultural zone.

The Project is a Community Solar Energy Generating System and plans to interconnect to the Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) electric distribution grid. At the time of its CPCN application submittal, the Applicant was approved as a subscriber organization by the PSC for 4 MW AC and had received conditional approval for its interconnection application from BGE.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Applicant's ERD states there are no jurisdictional waters of the U.S. or waters of the State, including wetlands, at the site.
- The Applicant states there are no Protected Lands, Critical Areas, or DNR Focal Areas at the property per Maryland's Environmental Resource & Land Information Network (MERLIN) and there are no potential habitats for Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS).
- The Applicant's Wetland Delineation Study (Appendix G of the Applicant's ERD) states "the property is in the Double Pipe Creek watershed", which is "within the Monocacy River Basin", 



- The Applicant included a Simplified Forest Stand Delineation (FSD) Plan which states that there is no forest cover in the project review area.
- The Applicant indicates that the subject property is not in a Tier II High Quality Waters Catchment.
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and DNR 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) resource list identifies northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), and certain migratory birds as species that could potentially be present. The applicant states that the project will not affect potential hibernaculum or involve tree clearing, so a no effect determination is appropriate.
- A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed for the property and no Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) were identified.
- The ERD states that the total impervious area for this Project will be limited to the piles supporting the panels, five concrete equipment pads, and the aggregate access road.

Noise Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that the maximum noise is expected to be produced during times when the pile driver is used. Post construction, most noise generated from the electrical equipment on the project site will be from the transformer and inverters. The closest off-site residential property is approximately 1,000 feet southwest of the site beyond Littlestown Pike and more than 1,000 feet away from the closest inverter and transformer.

Visual Impacts

- The Project will be enclosed and protected by a seven (7) foot tall security fence.
- The Applicant is not planning to alter any existing tree cover that already exists as natural screening. Additionally, the Applicant is proposing a 50-foot wide landscape buffer
- The nearest public use airport is the Carroll County Regional Airport located approximately one mile southwest of the project site. There are no other public use airports within three miles of the project site.
- The Applicant filed seven 7460-1 requests around the perimeter of the site to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Additionally, the Applicant requested a project review from the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA). All requests received a Determination of No Hazards to Air Navigation from the FAA and MAA.

Cultural Resource Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that there are no Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties listings or National Register of Historic Places listings for the Site and MHT determined the Project would have no adverse effect on historic properties.

Public Safety and Transportation

- During construction, major material and equipment will be delivered by tractor-trailers and offloaded by construction vehicles. After construction, traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for vegetation maintenance as well as maintenance for any operational issues.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant states that during construction, the Project will create approximately thirty (30) construction jobs (direct jobs) and sixty (60) indirect jobs. Following construction, the Project will create approximately two (2) direct jobs and five (5) indirect jobs.
- The Applicant indicates that the Project represents a capital investment of approximately \$11 million.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Avoided

- Based on the EPA calculator, the project will offset approximately 4,010 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually. Albeit this will decrease slightly due to degradation of the project components, this equates to approximately 160,400 metric tons over the Project's anticipated 40 year life cycle.