Note:
This summary was last updated on ***July 25, 2024***
For current information, follow this link:
PSC Docket Case #9739

Chaberton Solar Orchard Hill
Sudlersville Road, Sudlersville, MD 21668
(Queen Anne's County)

PSC Case #9739

PPRP Case Manager: Shawn Seaman

Note:
This summary is based on information provided in the CPCN Application filed with the PSC on ***May 10, 2024,*** *and the supplemental filing on May 16, 2024 and June 18, 2024, which are subject to change and have not yet been fully reviewed by PPRP.*

CPCN Timeline

CPCN Application filed on May 10, 2024
Applicant's Filed Direct Testimony Due: September 9, 2024
1st Public Hearing (Virtual): September 18, 2024
Intervenors' Direct Testimony Due: December 20, 2024
2nd Public Hearing: January 7, 2025
Settlement Status Update: January 13, 2025
PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if settlement is reached): January 22, 2025

Project Location:

The Orchard Hill Solar Project (Project) will be located on a portion of a larger property totaling 57.60 acres in Sudlersville, Maryland (Figure 1) in Queen Anne's County. Google Map Link. Per the Applicant, the approximate limit of disturbance (LOD) for the Project will be 20.03 acres.

Figure 1. Project Location

Source: Chaberton Orchard Hill CPCN Application

Project Overview:

Chaberton Solar Orchard Hill, LLC (Applicant) has applied for a CPCN to construct a 3.24 MW AC solar array in Queen Anne's County.

Project components include:

- Approximately 9,504 photovoltaic (PV) modules mounted on a fixed tilt post-supported rack system;
- Interconnection equipment to an existing 24.9kV feeder line which connects to BGE's existing Westminster substation;
- String inverters;
- Two power centers, each containing a medium voltage transformer, where the string inverters will be aggregated.

Site Description

The Property is in a rural, low population density setting and consists of farmland and undeveloped forested land. The Applicant has stated existing trees and vegetation onsite will provide adequate screening of the solar facility. The property does not contain residential dwellings or outbuildings. The Project site is accessible via a proposed access driveway off Goldsboro Road (Maryland Route 313); the proposed driveway to the site starts at the southeastern side of the site and runs northwest to the middle of the Property.

The Project is a Community Solar Energy Generating System (CSEGS) and will deliver all of its output to subscribers via the Delmarva Power and Light Company electric distribution grid. At the time of its CPCN Application submittal, the Applicant has received its PSC subscriber organization identification number and an updated interconnection application was re-submitted to Delmarva Power on May 21, 2024, and is currently in Delmarva Power's technical review stage.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Project property contains three (3) streams, each an unnamed tributary ("UNT") to Red Lion Branch, a Tier II Stream, along the western & northeastern portion of the proposed array.
- The Applicant's Environmental Review Document (ERD) states that perennial streams within the County have a minimum buffer of one hundred (100) feet while intermittent streams have a minimum buffer of fifty (50) feet.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- The Project Site is located in a Tier II catchment area. The Applicant received a letter from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) dated May 3, 2024, which states that the Project "does not require additional Tier II Antidegradation Review".
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service (DNR-WHS), and DNR-WHS indicated that the Project drains to Red Lion Branch, which supports the Mud Sunfish (*Acantharchus pomotis*), a watchlist species in Maryland, and the state-listed endangered Triangle Floater (*Alasmidonta undulata*). DNR-WHS also included protection measures that will protect aquatic habitats supporting rate, threatened, and endangered ("RTE") species.
- The Applicant coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which identified the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus)* as being potentially present in the Project Area. No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
- The Applicant intends to apply for the Pollinator-Friendly Solar Designation.
- The Project parcel contains a forested area in the northwest corner of the parcel. However, the Applicant's ERD states that there will be no removal of any forested resources.
- The Applicant's ERD states that protective measures for high quality waters have been incorporated into the stormwater management for the Project, by promoting the use of nonstructural best management practices (BMPs) to the maximum extent possible.

Noise Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that the nearest residential property is 1,000 feet away from the inverter/transformer pads.

Visual Impacts

- The Applicant indicates the panel arrays will be enclosed and protected using an 8-foot-tall fence.
- The Project is designed to follow Queen Anne's County required setbacks for Utility Scale Solar Arrays of 300-feet from the nearest residentially zoned parcel, 100-feet from any road or right of way, and 75-feet from any property line.

Cultural Resource Impacts

- The Applicant has corresponded with the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) which has determined that the Project would have no effect on historic properties.

Public Safety and Transportation

- The Applicant states that the entrance and exit to the Project site will be from Goldsboro Road.
- The Applicant's ERD states that a Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) Access Permit will be obtained via MDOT SHA District 2 (Queen Anne's County).
- The Applicant does not anticipate that the Project will require any overweight or oversize load permits. Any damage to local roadways will be restored to be in accordance with County requirements and standards.
- The Applicant's ERD states that during the construction period, large materials and equipment will be transported to staging areas on tractor-trailers and offloaded by construction vehicles. However, the Applicant anticipates that personnel vehicles will comprise most daily construction traffic. During operation, traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for seasonal mowing and vegetation maintenance as well as maintenance for any operational issues.
- There will be no radiofrequency or thermal impacts to communications systems or military operations.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant estimates that the Project will create 41 direct jobs and 30 indirect jobs during construction and installation. For the first five years the project will create 2 direct and 1 indirect jobs.
- The Applicant's ERD states that there will be significant economic benefits resulting from the Project including $13,798 in total savings per average customer over the life of the project.
- The Applicant's ERD states that $1.58 million in state income tax and $868 thousand in county property taxes.
- The Applicant is planning to commit $5,000 per MW AC of solar capacity – estimated to be $16,200 for Project Orchard Hill– in monetary donations or community improvements of equal value.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Avoided

- The Applicant indicates that the Project would remove 3,800 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions from the Mid-Atlantic region by using renewable energy.