Note:
This summary was last updated on
Aug. 5, 2021
For current information, follow this link:
PSC Docket Case #9663

CPV BACKBONE SOLAR
Near 999 Sharpless Mine Road
Swanton, MD
(Garrett County)

PSC Case #9663

PPRP Case Manager: Bob Sadzinski

Note:
This summary is based on information provided in the CPCN Application dated ***April 27, 2021*** *which is subject to change and has not yet been fully reviewed by PPRP*

CPCN Timeline

CPCN Application filed on April 27, 2021
1st Public Hearing: August 3, 2021
Applicant Direct Testimony: August 6, 2021
Intervenor's Direct Testimony: October 13, 2021
2nd Public Hearing: October 19, 2021
PSC Evidentiary Hearing: October 25, 2021

Project Location:

The Backbone Solar Project (Project) will be located on approximately 2,500 acres of six parcels that total over 4,470 acres, located near 999 Sharpless Mine Road in Swanton (Figure 1). Google Map Link Per the Applicant the approximate limit of construction for the project will be 1,170 acres.

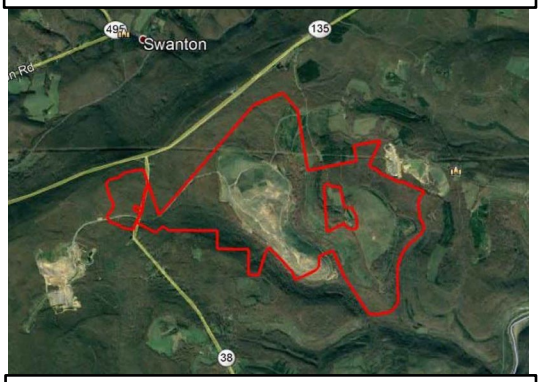
Project Overview:

CPV Backbone Solar, LLC has filed for a CPCN to construct a 175 MW AC solar array in Garrett County.

Project components include:

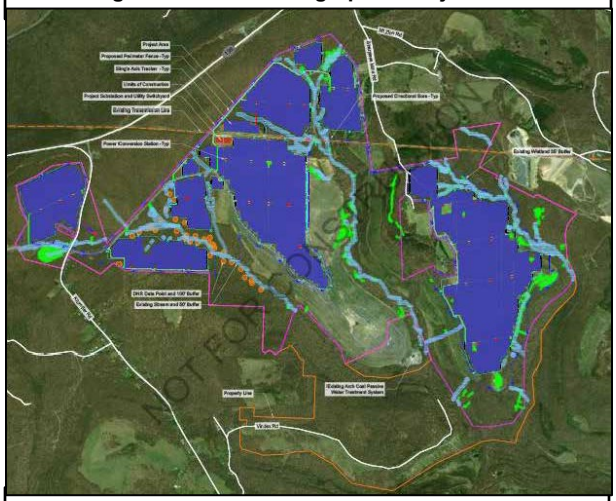
- Approximately 406,100 photovoltaic (PV) modules mounted on rotating single axis trackers
- Interconnection equipment
- 32 power stations (each with 2 inverters and 1 AC transformer)
- 1 onsite substation and switchyard

Figure 1: Project Location



Source: CPV Backbone Solar CPCN Application

Figure 2: Aerial Photograph of Project Site



Source: CPV Backbone Solar CPCN Application

Site Description

The Project site is located on a previously active coal mine operation that has since been closed and the site reclaimed. The Applicant has signed an option to lease the Project area (approximately 2,500 acres) from the current property owners, the Douglas Coal Company and Mr. Frank & Mrs. Bonnie Farrell. Figure 2 shows the proposed Project layout, with the proposed location of the solar arrays identified in blue. The Project site is not located within a zoned district of Garrett County, and therefore, does not require a Special Exception as it is a permitted use by right.

Surrounding land uses include agricultural, forested, residential, and industrial areas.

The Project will interconnect to the Albright – Mt. Zion 138 kV transmission line that bisects the Project site via a new onsite interconnecting switchyard. The new switchyard will be approximately 23 miles from the Albright Substation.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Application states that the Project will include extensive tree clearing and timbering of approximately 654 acres. The Project is exempt from FCA requirements due to its location in Garrett County. The Applicant intends to clear and timber the site prior to the issuance of a CPCN, but no grubbing or stump removal will take place. The Applicant is currently consulting with several parties on this matter and is working with Garrett County on the development of a Concept Phasing/Sequencing Plan to define how the timbering, clearing, and grading work will be conducted. In addition, the Applicant has agreed to restrict tree clearing from May 1 to July 31 to avoid the maternity roost period for the Northern Long-Eared Bat and Indiana Bat, as recommended by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The Project site is located in the North Branch Potomac watershed. The Project area avoids the Wolfden Run and Crabtree Creek Tier II watersheds and is principally located within the Left Prong-Three Forks Run, Three Forks Run, Right Prong-Three Forks run, and Jennings Run watersheds, which all flow into the North Branch Potomac River.
- The Project has been designed to avoid all identified wetlands and streams and includes the establishment of a 35-foot buffer around all jurisdictional wetlands and 50-foot buffer around all designated streams. MDE's Nontidal Wetlands Program and Waterways Construction Division conducted numerous field visits and has confirmed that all wetlands, streams, floodplains, Tier II streams, and Catchment Areas have been avoided.
- DNR's Wildlife & Heritage Services conducted field evaluations of the Project site and identified potential habitats for the following rare, threatened, and endangered species: Rock Vole (*Microtus chrotorrhinus*), Long-tailed Shrew (*Sorex dispar*), and Appalachian Cottontail (*Sylvilagus obscurus*). The Applicant has designed the Project site to avoid these areas and established a 100-foot buffer around these sensitive habitat areas.
- The Project site lies outside of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.

Visual Impacts

- The Applicant has indicated that approximately 1,150 acres of forest will remain surrounding the Project site and considers this adequate to screen the Project without requiring any additional landscape buffer.
- The Project itself will have limited lighting requirements. Each inverter/transformer pad, the onsite substation and switchyard, and entrance locations may have overhead down shielded light fixtures.
- The Applicant is proposing a minimum 50-foot setback from public road right-of-way's, with the setback extended to over 100-feet in most locations.
- The Applicant has conducted a glare analysis and determined that there will be no glare effects to any nearby airports associated with the Project.

Transportation

- During construction, equipment will be delivered by tractor-trailers and offloaded by construction vehicles. Excavation and other heavy equipment that may be used could include dump trucks, trenching equipment, concrete trucks, front loaders, backhoes, post installation equipment, excavators, and other similar vehicles and equipment. Daily construction traffic will include cars, pickup trucks, and other personnel vehicles.
- After construction, traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for seasonal mowing and vegetation maintenance as well as quarterly to yearly maintenance on the solar array.
- The Project will be completely fenced and will utilize the existing mining entrances along Kitzmiller Road, a state highway (MD 38), and Sharpless Mine Road.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant estimates that the Project will create approximately 200 design, management, and construction jobs during the construction period.
- The Application indicates that the Project represents a capital investment of approximately $250 million.

Cultural & Aesthetic

- The Application indicates that the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) has concluded that no Phase I archaeological survey or Determination of Eligibility (DOE) forms are required for the Project site.