



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson
Ellen Nowak, Commissioner
Tyler Huebner, Commissioner

4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

October 19, 2022

Re: Application of Saratoga Solar Project, LLC for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to Construct a Solar Electric Generation Facility in the Town of Saratoga, Wood County, Wisconsin

9816-CE-100

To the Recipient,

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) received an application from Saratoga Solar Project, LLC (Saratoga Solar or applicant) for the construction of a new solar electric generation facility and associated facilities, including an electric transmission tie line to connect the solar facility to the existing transmission grid, and a battery energy storage system (BESS). The project would be located in the town of Saratoga in Wood County, Wisconsin. The Commission is sending this letter to property owners near the proposed solar facility site or directly along the proposed routes of the tie line as well as interested individuals who have asked to be placed on our mailing list. This letter is also being sent to public officials who may wish to place this notification in a location where it can be viewed by the public.

The solar electric generation facility is a Type III action under Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 4.10(3). The BESS is a Type II action under Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 4.10(2).

Commission staff from the Office of Environmental Analysis of the Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs completed an environmental review of the proposed project and prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to determine if an environmental impact statement (EIS) is necessary. The EA is a written review of the potential impacts of the proposed project that would affect the quality of the human environment as described in Wis. Stat. § 1.11(2)(c). The EA also describes ways of mitigating or avoiding some of the expected impacts and concludes with the evaluation of ten items described in Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 4.10(2)(d).

The preliminary determination indicates that no significant impacts on the human or natural environment are likely to occur as a result of the construction and operation of this project. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required. Comments regarding this determination can be directed to the contact person listed at the end of this letter.

The remainder of this letter describes the primary impacts of the project and summarizes the conclusions of the EA. To obtain a copy of the EA, please request a copy from the contact person listed at the end of this letter.



Overview of the Proposed Project

The applicant is Saratoga Solar, which would develop and sell the project to a utility or an independent power producer. Saratoga Solar, a Delaware limited liability company, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Savion, LLC (Savion), a Delaware limited liability company.

The applicant is proposing construction of a new electric generation facility for 150.5 megawatts (MW) of AC power using photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, a 50 MW battery energy storage System (BESS), and a 500 foot long 138 kilovolt (kV) tie line. The proposed solar arrays would be located on approximately 825 acres of land in the Town of Saratoga, in Wood County. The proposed solar array area would be in sections 19, 20, 21, 29, and 30 in the Town of Saratoga; an alternative solar array area would be located in sections 20, 21, 28, and 29. The alternative area could be used when issues occur involving environmental impacts, construction plans, or other conditions that would limit use of the proposed solar array area. The application reviewed and evaluated an approximately 1,926-acre project study area.

Potential Environmental Effects from the Proposed Project

There would be temporary impacts during construction such as increased traffic, noise, and air pollution in the construction areas. Construction of the project would cause temporary increases to traffic in the project area because of workers, heavy equipment, and materials deliveries using local roads. Construction would also create loose or disturbed soils that could be susceptible to erosion and cause dust. The project applicant provided several plans to reduce construction impacts on traffic, noise, dust, and water runoff.

After construction, the project would create impacts to the local environment resulting from the new facility and the change in land use.

The project would affect the aesthetics of the area as long as it is in operation, which may be looked at favorably or unfavorably depending on the viewer. The applicant plans to leave a 50-foot tree buffer in place around the facility to decrease visual impacts. It performed a glint and glare study that determined the new facility would not create new impacts to people or cars. There is another solar generation facility nearby (Wood County Solar) that may contribute to the change in visual aesthetics throughout the area.

A noise study was conducted to measure the current sound levels around the project area. The study estimated the impact of the proposed project using the specifications of planned equipment. The results found that the new project would not increase noise in the area above specified daytime and nighttime limits.

The project would affect the animal and plant species that currently use the land. Many trees would be removed and the project area would be converted into grassland. The change in habitat would negatively affect certain animals while benefiting some others. The applicant intends to replant the area with low growing plants as well as small patches of pollinator plant species. The project applicant also plans to use animal-friendly fencing that allows small animals passage under or through fences.

The project applicant completed an endangered resources (ER) review with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The ER review found protected animal species were unlikely to be within the project area, therefore special no actions would be required.

The project area was reviewed and found that no known historic buildings or archaeological sites are present within the proposed project area. Therefore, the project is not expected to have any adverse effects to historic resources.

Conclusion

The project as proposed in the application and subsequent filings, including use of the stated construction methods and implementation of the mitigation plans, is not expected to cause any significant environmental effects. No significant impacts on the human environment that would warrant the preparation of an EIS are expected if this project were constructed using some combination of the currently proposed array sites. Thus, preparation of an EIS, as described in Wis. Stat. § 1.11, is not required for this project.

Copies of the EA are available upon request, either in electronic or paper format (for a paper copy, an address must be provided). Requests for a copy of the EA should be made to Adam Ingwell at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin by telephone at (608) 267-9197, by e-mail at adam.ingwell@wisconsin.gov, or by regular mail directed to the Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 7854, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7854.

Comments on the finding of no significant impact for this proposed project should be made to Adam Ingwell at the address above, by email at adam.ingwell@wisconsin.gov, or through the Commission's web comment form. Go to the Commission's web site at <http://psc.wi.gov>, click on "Commission Actions," then click on "File a Public Comment." On the next page, select "File a comment" for case 9816-CE-100.



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Please provide any comments by November 4, 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Adam Ingwell".

Adam Ingwell
Environmental Affairs Coordinator – Supervisor
Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs

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