



## **Meade County Solar Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Describe the Project**

Meade County Solar is a proposed 40-megawatt (40 MW) solar farm to be located in southwestern Meade County, Kentucky. The project site, about 4 miles west of Flaherty, KY, will consist of two separate sections totaling 370 acres of land: one section along Stith Valley Road, and one section along Big Spring Road.

The generating system will include approximately 104,000 solar panels, ground-mounted on a racking system that will rotate to follow the sun. Dispersed throughout the solar farm will be electrical equipment that will gather the electricity we generate and feed power lines to a new substation that will be built for the interconnection of the solar farm to the Big Rivers transmission line in that area.

The proposed solar farm will sell 100% of its output to Big Rivers Electric Corporation. It is expected to produce 91 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year - roughly 85% of the amount of electricity consumed by all the households in Meade County each year.

'Meade County Solar' is scheduled to be constructed and begin operations in 2022.

### **Who are Community Energy and Meade County Solar LLC?**

Community Energy is one of the leading renewable energy development companies in the U.S. We've been in business for 21 years, developing many of the first and largest wind and solar projects in the country. This includes over 1,300 megawatts of solar farms similar to our proposed Meade County Solar project. Community Energy is headquartered in Radnor, Pennsylvania with additional offices in Boulder, Colorado, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

In our role as a solar developer, we identify good markets for solar power, we find appropriate sites for solar projects, then we obtain the necessary leases, studies, permits, surveys, etc. to create a "shovel-ready" solar project. In parallel, we line up an investor who will finance the project and become the long-term owner-operator.

For each of the projects we develop, we create a separate project company that holds all of the assets of the project. For this project, we created Meade County Solar LLC. Today, Community Energy owns 100% of Meade County Solar LLC. Once the project is shovel-ready, an investor will become the new owner. But Meade County Solar LLC, and all its rights and responsibilities, will endure that transition.

## Why Meade County?

Last year, Big Rivers Electric Corporation conducted a competitive bid process, seeking to buy solar power under a long-term fixed-price contract. Community Energy's proposal for a solar farm in Meade County was one of the selected bids. The result will be low-cost locally-produced solar power.

## Are you leasing or buying the land?

Meade County Solar LLC has entered into a number of long-term leases and easement agreements with local landowners. Our leases allow for 30 years of operation, with the option to extend for an additional 10 years.

## Will you remove the equipment and restore the land at the end of the project?

Yes. Our leases require us to remove our equipment and restore the land at the end of the lease. In addition, our leases require us to establish and maintain resources that will pay for the cost of removal, net of any salvage value. Meade County, through its solar ordinance, also requires us to post a security bond to fund the removal of the system.

## What permits will the project require?

During the development stage, the project will seek a *Construction Certificate* from the Kentucky State Board on Electric Generation and Transmission Siting (the "Siting Board"). The Siting Board is organized by the Kentucky Public Service Commission.

The Siting Board will be composed of seven (7) members: the three (3) members of the Public Service Commission, two (2) members of state government (the Secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Energy and Environment or her designee, and the Secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development or his designee) and two (2) members of local government (the Chairman of the Planning Commission, and a resident of Meade County appointed by the Governor).

Over the course of a roughly nine-month period, the Siting Board will review the proposed project, with a focus on three areas: 1) environmental matters such as noise and visual impacts, 2) economic impacts, and 3) the impact of the proposed facility on Kentucky's electric transmission grid.

More information can be found at <https://psc.ky.gov/Home/EGTSB>

Just prior to construction, the project will seek a number of permits including erosion control, stormwater, and driveway permits from the state, and a building permit from Meade County. These permits will be driven by the construction plans for the solar farm, which will likely be finalized in late 2021.

## How will the project impact the environment?

As part of the development process, we have already conducted multiple studies to identify sensitive features of our proposed project site. These include:

- A delineation of any wetlands and streams
- A search for any hazardous materials on site
- An assessment of the cultural resources on site (archeological and architectural)
- An identification of any threatened and endangered wildlife habitat on site

By identifying these resources at the front end, we can design our facility in a way that avoids any impacts. That's our plan; stay away from any sensitive features on the site.

The construction of the solar farm is also low impact. Unlike housing or commercial development, a solar farm does not require brick-and-mortar buildings or paved parking lots. The "foundation" of a solar farm is a steel post, driven into the ground. The racking system is bolted to the posts, and the solar panels are bolted to the racking system. When the project is at its end, this process is reversed, and the site can easily be returned to open land.

Underneath the solar panels, we will plant a slow and low-growing grass to manage any runoff or erosion. The land will essentially lay fallow for the 30-year project period.

During operations, there will be no emissions of any kind. To the contrary, the electricity we will produce will offset emissions at "traditional" power plants. We believe our local environmental impact will be neutral, while our broader environmental impact will be positive.

## Do the solar panels contain hazardous materials?

There are no hazardous materials in modern solar photovoltaic panels. The panels we use are the same as those installed on rooftops of houses. They are solid state, much like a semiconductor, and contain no liquids. If a panel is damaged, there is nothing to spill onto the ground. There are no special requirements for disposal of solar panels. There are now tens of thousands of acres of ground-mounted solar projects in the U.S, with no track record of any release of hazardous materials from those panels.

## How about project security?

No part of the solar farm will be accessible to the public. In compliance with Meade County's solar ordinance, the equipment will be surrounded by a 7-foot-high security fence, typically a chain link fence.

Within the solar farm, all solar equipment will be grounded and touch-safe, fully compliant with all applicable codes and accessible only to qualified personnel, with the exception of guided tours. When the amperage or voltage accumulates to a dangerous level, those wires will be buried in conduit underground. Any wires outside of our security fence will either be buried or placed on poles to the same standard of safety required by the local utility.

Prior to commencing operations, we will provide an orientation to local first responders to educate them about the project, the equipment, access, and procedures in case of unexpected events. Contact information for our monitoring and response center will be posted on the project fence to ensure the public can easily contact project representatives.

### **Will the solar farm be an eyesore?**

Solar farms are tidy and low-profile. To diminish the effect on the viewscape, we're planning to set our equipment back at least 500 feet from any neighboring house or public road. Where existing natural vegetation around the perimeter of the site provides a visual screen, we will maintain that vegetative buffer. Where a natural buffer does not exist, we plan to install a double offset row of evergreen plantings that will grow to at least 7 feet in height. We will also reach out to any nearby landowners with a potential view of the solar farm, to collaborate on any additional measures we can take. Our goal is to be a good neighbor and to work in good faith to address any concerns.

### **Will the solar farm be noisy, or cause glare, or heat?**

The solar farm will not be noisy. There are only a few pieces of solar equipment that make any sound. These are electrical devices equipped with cooling fans. These pieces of equipment will generally be located toward the middle of the solar farm, such that you cannot hear them from the periphery. And the periphery will be at least 500 feet from any neighboring house, with existing vegetation or a planted buffer in-between. Our analysis estimates that any sound emanating from the solar farm will be at a level no higher than that of a "rural area at night."

The solar farm typically will not produce regular, significant glare. Solar panels are designed to absorb light, not reflect it, and are treated with an anti-reflection coating. Nevertheless, sometimes the sun can hit the solar panels at just the right angle to create glare. This is an infrequent and momentary occurrence, and typically does not have a significant adverse effect on neighboring houses.

Solar farms do not produce enough heat to be noticeable to adjacent properties.

### **What positive benefits can the solar farm bring?**

The proposed solar farm will generate a number of positive benefits:

**Jobs** – There will be about 150 jobs created during the 6-9 month construction period. Most of these jobs don't require experience or a specific skill set, so they're accessible to a wide range of workers. Once operational, the solar farm will require 2-3 full-time employees. These will likely be local hires.

**Contracts** – Typically, a number of contracts are awarded to certain local trades during construction. This includes electrical work, earthmoving, fencing, landscaping, and security.

**Local Spending** – During the construction period, a significant amount of local spending will occur. This will be for items such as gas, food, lodging, clothes, entertainment, tools, and other sundries.

**Taxes** – The solar farm will pay hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxes on land that is currently paying less than \$10,000 a year. Unlike residential or commercial development, this tax revenue will not be offset by an increase in County expenses for schools, water, sewer, etc.

**Low-cost electricity** – Meade County Solar will sell 100% of its output to Big Rivers at a price that was the result of a highly-competitive bid process. This is not expensive “green” energy. It’s simply electricity, provided at a price competitive with any other source, and locked-in under a long-term contract.

### **Additional Questions**

Do you have additional questions? Email them to us at [meadecountysolar@communityenergyinc.com](mailto:meadecountysolar@communityenergyinc.com) or call us at (866) 946-3123.