

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Application of Hillcrest Solar I, )  
LLC, for an Amendment to its Certificate to Install and ) Case No. 18-1267-EL-BGA  
Operate an Electric Generation Facility in in Green )  
Township, Brown County, Ohio. )**

Members of the Board:

Chairman, Public Utilities Commission	Ohio House of Representatives
Director, Development Services Agency	Ohio Senate
Director, Department of Health	
Director, Department of Agriculture	
Director, Environmental Protection Agency	
Director, Department of Natural Resources	
Public Member	

To the Honorable Power Siting Board:

Please review the attached Staff Report of Investigation, which has been filed in accordance with Ohio Power Siting Board rules. The application in this case is subject to an approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Sincerely,



Tamara S. Turkenton  
Director, Rates and Analysis  
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 18-1267-EL-BGA (associated with prior Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN)  
**Project Name:** Hillcrest Solar Farm  
**Project Location:** Brown County  
**Applicant:** Hillcrest Solar I, LLC  
**Application Filing Date:** October 17, 2018  
**Inspection Date:** December 12, 2018  
**Report Date:** December 26, 2018  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** none  
**Staff Assigned:** G. Zeto, J. Cross

### Application Description

Hillcrest Solar I, LLC (Applicant) plans to construct the Hillcrest Solar Farm, a solar-powered generating facility on approximately 2,100 acres of leased land located in Brown County, Ohio. The Ohio Power Siting Board (Board) certificated this project on February 15, 2018 in Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN.

Through this amendment application, the Applicant proposes to increase the area of impact within the same approximately 2,100 acre project area from approximately 1,100 acres to 1,855 acres and to increase the output of the facility from 125 megawatts (MW) to 200 MW. This increase will require approximately 500,000 to 750,000 solar modules, instead of 375,000 to 475,000 solar modules. The Applicant also proposes several slight reroutes and clarifications to the impacts associated with the originally proposed access roads and collection lines. The original application and staff report assumed the presence of solar panels throughout the project area, with the understanding that some of the project area would not be developed. As such, this proposed amendment does not introduce additional unstudied areas of impact, but would use more of the original project area which was previously reviewed.

### Electric Grid Interconnection

The proposed facility would interconnect to the electric grid at Duke Energy's existing Hillcrest 138 kilovolt (kV) substation.

The Applicant submitted a new service request to PJM Interconnection, LLC (PJM) requesting to interconnect the Hillcrest Solar Farm project to the bulk power system on February 24, 2016. PJM gave the interconnection request a queue ID of AC2-066. The Applicant's original interconnection request for the Hillcrest Solar Farm, interconnection queue ID AB1-014, was for 125 megawatts (MW) and approved by the Board in Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN. The request in queue ID AC2-066 would increase the energy output of the facility by 75 MW. The total energy of the combined interconnection queues AB1-014 and AC2-066 would be 200 MW, of which 75 MW would be available in the PJM capacity market. The Interconnection Service Agreement for both

queue positions was issued by PJM and approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in June 2018.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

The capacity market ensures the adequate availability of necessary generation resources can be called upon to meet current and future demand. This means electricity would be available to the system during times of high demand.

PJM used a 2020 summer peak power flow model to evaluate the regional reliability impacts. The PJM System Impact Study results did not indicate reliability issues with the requested 75 MW increase.

The facility would serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity by providing additional electrical generation to the regional transmission grid, would be consistent with plans for expansion of the regional power system, and would serve the interests of electric system economy and reliability.

## **Application Review**

### *Socioeconomic*

The Applicant proposes to construct the facility on up to 1,855 acres of privately-owned land within a larger area of approximately 2,100 acres, comprised of over 30 separate properties. This amendment does not propose impacts to any new land uses or agricultural district lands. The increased equipment would result in approximately 25 percent increase in construction truck traffic. However, the recommendations of the original certificate would remain unchanged.

The cultural resources report and the visual resource assessment prepared for the original application were based on an examination of the entire project area and viewshed modeling conducted as part of those investigations assumed the presence of solar panels throughout the project area. As such, all information presented in those reports account for the potential impacts relevant to this amendment and no new impacts are anticipated.

Due to the increase to 200 MW, the annual payment in lieu of taxes would now be estimated to generate \$1.4 million to \$1.8 million in revenue annually to Brown County, instead of \$875,000 to 1.163 million per year.

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1. PJM Interconnection, LLC is the regional transmission organization charged with planning for upgrades and administering the generation queue for the regional transmission system in Ohio. Generators wanting to interconnect to the bulk electric transmission system located in the PJM control area are required to submit an interconnection application for review of system impacts. The interconnection process provides for the construction of expansions and upgrades of the PJM transmission system, as needed to maintain compliance with reliability criteria with the addition of generation in its footprint.

2. PJM Interconnection, LLC, "Queue Numbers AB1-014 and AC2-066," accessed December 5, 2018, <https://pjm.com/planning/services-requests/interconnection-queues.aspx>.

3. *In the matter of the Application of Hillcrest Solar I, LLC for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need to Construct an Electric Generation Facility in Green Township, Brown County, Ohio*, Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN, (Opinion, Order, and Certificate)(April 15, 2018)

4. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, FERC Docket: ER18-1610-000 "Interconnection Service Agreement No. 4776," accessed December 5, 2018, <https://etariff.ferc.gov/TariffSectionDetails.aspx?tid=1734&sid=233255>.

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### *Surface Waters*

The updates to access roads and collection lines would result in an additional 13 stream crossings. Collection lines would cross an additional seven open-cut installation crossings and four additional horizontal directional drilling (HDD) crossings totaling an additional 166 linear feet of temporary impacts. Seven of the eight open-cut crossings would be collocated with access road crossings to consolidate the area of impact. Impacts associated with two previously impacted streams would change as a result of access road updates totaling and additional eight linear feet. Two category 1 wetlands would be crossed by collection lines. Impacts to these wetlands would be avoided through the use of HDD. Staff expects that the same Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 51 which was applicable to the original proposal would still apply to the project as proposed in this amendment.

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

Impacts associated with the proposed amendment would occur within the same habitats as previously certificated. No additional species would be impacted as a result of the proposed changes. The conditions of the original certificate would cover any potential impacts to threatened and endangered species associated with the project as proposed in this amendment.

### **Conclusion**

Staff believes that the 75 MW increase in capacity in conjunction with the increase in acreage of the facility and additional solar panels necessary to achieve that capacity would not impact the Applicant's ability to comply with the conditions of the Original Certificate issued in Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN.

### **Recommended Findings**

Staff recommends that the Board approve the application, provided that the certificate continues to include all conditions previously specified by the Board as applicable to this facility.

### **Recommended Condition:**

1. The Applicant shall adhere to all conditions of the Opinion, Order, and Certificate in Case No. 17-1152-EL-BGN.

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

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**Case No(s). 18-1267-EL-BGA**

Summary: Staff Report of Investigation electronically filed by Mr. Grant T Zeto on behalf of Staff of the Ohio Power Siting Board