

Birch Solar 1, LLC
Case No. 20-1605-EL-BGN

Exhibit E
Frequently asked Questions from Public
Information Meetings

November 2020

Frequently Asked Questions from Birch Solar Project Public Information Meetings, November 2020

Question	Answer
Health and Safety	
Can birds catch on fire if they fly over a solar facility?	<p>Bird safety, as well as preserving their habitats, is an important topic to all of us and we understand you may have concerns after reading information on the internet.</p> <p>For Birch Solar, we're using solar photovoltaic, or PV, panels. This technology is designed to absorb as much sunlight as possible in order to generate electricity. Solar PV technology will not harm birds. In fact, we have seen bird habitats <i>increase</i> at our solar projects because once they're built they are undisturbed for many years.</p> <p>The technology that you've read about having issues with birds is called solar thermal. That technology uses mirrors that reflects – instead of absorbing – sunlight to the top of towers that are hundreds of feet tall. When that technology reflects sunlight, the beams can get hot and harm birds. We are absolutely not using that technology at Birch Solar.</p> <p>This study that includes several of Lightsource bp's solar facilities in the UK shows an increase in biodiversity as well as an increase in bird species and abundance of birds at solar PV facilities. As a company, we've been building solar projects with the aim to increase local biodiversity for over 10 years now.</p>
Do solar projects increase local temperatures?	<p>A study from the University of Maryland shows that any created heat by a solar project is much smaller than that created by urban areas, dissipates quickly and can't be measured 100 feet away. We also plant ground cover which provides a cooling effect, and as referenced in the study, mitigates temperature increases.</p>
Are solar panels hazardous to the environment and our health?	<p>Lightsource bp utilizes tier-one equipment suppliers, and requires solar panels to pass testing regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure <i>they are not hazardous to people or the environment</i>. It's a part of our equipment supplier contract obligations, and we will not buy solar panels from any manufacturers who have not passed this testing.</p>
Will solar panels end up in a landfill in my area?	<p>Solar panels used at our solar facilities pass rigorous testing to prove they are non-hazardous under federal law and could be disposed of in regular landfills just like household garbage. However, <i>Lightsource bp is committed to recycling all solar panels</i>, including those that will be used at our Birch Solar and all our solar projects in the U.S. – That includes any panels damaged during construction, operations, and all panels at the end of life/decommissioning.</p>
Can solar panels be recycled?	<p>Lightsource bp is a board member of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), an organization whose members are dedicated to responsible end-of-life management and are proactively developing recycling processes for the solar industry as a whole. SEIA has created a national solar panel recycling member-based program that aggregates the services offered by <i>recycling vendors here in the U.S.</i> Already SEIA's recycling partners have processed mor</p>

Frequently Asked Questions from Birch Solar Project Public Information Meetings, November 2020

Question	Answer																		
	than 4 million pounds of PV modules and related equipment since the program launched.																		
Is EMF a concern?	EMF from solar is no more concerning than EMF from home appliances. We are all exposed to EMF throughout our daily lives. All electric lines and equipment, including the lines to homes and businesses and home appliances, create EMF. Several studies have measured <i>EMF at the perimeter of a solar facility to be negligible</i> . We have published one of the studies on our website.																		
Will I hear noise from the solar project?	Any sound from Birch Solar will be limited to inverters and transformer which cannot be heard past the project boundaries. Local regulations require that our noise levels at our site boundary are <i>no greater than 5 decibels above ambient levels</i> . We will have sound modeling to confirm as part of our OPSB application and will post this information on our website as soon as it's available. Although certainly not anticipated, if noise levels are greater than required regulations, Lightsource bp is required to resolve any noise issue.																		
Is glare an issue?	Solar panels are designed to <i>absorb, not reflect</i> , sunlight and reflect less light than glass or water. Regardless, a glare study will be completed as part of our OPSB application to confirm that there will be no issues.																		
PILOT																			
What is a PILOT?	<p>The PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Tax) program, as set out by the State of Ohio, provides sustainable and steady tax dollars into the community for the local governments and schools, as well as significant job creation. This mechanism is available whether or not a county is in an "Alternative Energy Zone."</p> <p>For Birch Solar, it is estimated that the PILOT program will bring approximately \$2.7M annually to the community and \$81M throughout the life of the project. That is in comparison to the less than \$100,000 currently paid in traditional agricultural tax on the project property. The PILOT amount is distributed:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="505 1270 1456 1596"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" data-bbox="505 1270 1456 1312">Approximate Property Tax Payment in Lieu of Taxes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 1312 868 1396">Joint Vocational School (JVS)</td> <td data-bbox="868 1312 1226 1396">\$4.05M</td> <td data-bbox="1226 1312 1456 1396">5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 1396 868 1438">School District</td> <td data-bbox="868 1396 1226 1438">\$43.74M</td> <td data-bbox="1226 1396 1456 1438">54%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 1438 868 1480">County</td> <td data-bbox="868 1438 1226 1480">\$13.77M</td> <td data-bbox="1226 1438 1456 1480">17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 1480 868 1522">Township</td> <td data-bbox="868 1480 1226 1522">\$19.44M</td> <td data-bbox="1226 1480 1456 1522">24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="505 1522 868 1596">Total for life of project (approximate)</td> <td data-bbox="868 1522 1226 1596">\$81M</td> <td data-bbox="1226 1522 1456 1596">100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The impact of the PILOT program on school funding is significant; approximately \$1.5M is provided to the local school districts annually. These funds can be used as the school districts see fit and often are able to reduce the need for additional levies. In November 2018, the Shawnee School Board's request for an additional \$4.4M mills levy was rejected, for the second time. Lightsource bp believes this additional \$1.5M annually will help to alleviate the need for these additional taxpayer funds.</p>	Approximate Property Tax Payment in Lieu of Taxes			Joint Vocational School (JVS)	\$4.05M	5%	School District	\$43.74M	54%	County	\$13.77M	17%	Township	\$19.44M	24%	Total for life of project (approximate)	\$81M	100%
Approximate Property Tax Payment in Lieu of Taxes																			
Joint Vocational School (JVS)	\$4.05M	5%																	
School District	\$43.74M	54%																	
County	\$13.77M	17%																	
Township	\$19.44M	24%																	
Total for life of project (approximate)	\$81M	100%																	

Frequently Asked Questions from Birch Solar Project Public Information Meetings, November 2020

Question	Answer
<p>Are there any benefits to the community with a PILOT?</p>	<p>The benefits of the PILOT extend beyond financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a minimum ratio of 80% of Ohio-domiciled full-time equivalent employees employed in the construction and installation of the project. • Requires a certificate from each county engineer with which the taxpayer has an agreement regarding the repair, rebuilding, and reinforcement of roads, bridges, and culverts that continues beyond the completion of construction, to the effect that the taxpayer is not in default on any of its obligations. • Required training and emergency responders in handling emergencies at the project. • Project must establish a relationship with a member of the university system of Ohio or with a person offering an apprenticeship program registered with the U.S. Department of Labor or the Ohio Apprenticeship Council to educate and train individuals for careers in the wind or solar energy industry.
<p>Why would the local community want to enter into the PILOT?</p>	<p>A PILOT ensures that the tax revenue from Birch Solar is held constant over the life of the project (vs a declining tax revenue with the traditional personal property tax regime where taxes decline as the equipment depreciates). Further, the PILOT mandates 80% of the project’s workforce be Ohioans and requires commitments between the project and local higher educational institutions to encourage local workforce development, as well as training and equipment for local responders.</p>
<p>Does the county lose out on tax revenue as a result of a solar project obtaining a PILOT?</p>	<p>No, the PILOT revenue represents an average of 15-20 times <i>increase</i> in local tax revenue when compared to the current agricultural use.</p>
<p>What is the process for Lightsource bp to apply for a PILOT?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applicant submits the application to the Ohio Development Service Agency 2. The ODSA sends the application to the county commissioners 3. The county commissioners then have 30 days to issue a resolution approving the application 4. If the resolution is issued, ODSA will issue a certificate that says the applicant is a Qualified Energy Project (QEP) eligible for the PILOT exemption – provided they meet all of the requirements for the PILOT after construction is complete. 5. Once construction is complete – within 90 days after COD – the application submits a construction completion report to ODSA that must include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Certificate from county engineer that the road use agreement was complied with b. Certificate from first responders that the training and equipment was provided c. Verification that the university or apprenticeship program is in place d. Verification and documentation that 80% of the construction and installation employees were Ohio-domicile

Frequently Asked Questions from Birch Solar Project Public Information Meetings, November 2020

Question	Answer
	6. If all this information is provided, the ODSA will authorize the applicant to receive the PILOT exemption and send notice to the county of same.
Environmental	
How will threatened and endangered species be protected?	State and federally protected wildlife will not be impacted by Birch Solar. Through regulatory agency consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the project will avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species that are potentially present at the project site.
How will the eagle habitats and the habitats of other birds in the area be protected?	Birch Solar will be developed in a manner that conserves important habitats and species. We commit to no tree removal, so that bald eagles and other raptor habitat are not disturbed. Prey availability will be the same or will increase due fostering biodiversity at the site. Additionally, the project will be setback from all wetlands at the project site.
Should I be concerned about stormwater runoff from the project?	A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan is required by Ohio EPA for the project. Through this process we will create best management practices to reduce erosion and sedimentation. By implementing this plan it guarantees that <i>project related construction activities will not negatively impact water resources, including surface and ground water</i> . If there is any runoff to neighboring properties created by the project that causes any negative impacts, Lightsource bp would need to correct any issues and can be fined for violations.
Long-term land management	
Will the land be properly maintained?	During the operational life of the project, Lightsource bp will have an operations budget of \$4.6 million per year to maintain the facility and the land. As a long-term owner and operator of the project, we have a significant financial interest to maintain maximum energy production, which involves keeping the vegetation tidy to keep it from interfering with the trackers or shading the panels. <i>Birch Solar will be monitored and maintained by a team that ensures all equipment is functioning properly and safely, as well as vegetation management and upkeep.</i> There will be operations and maintenance workers on site every workday, Monday – Friday along with 24 hour availability in case of emergency.
Decommissioning	
Can the land be returned to agriculture?	At the end of the project, the installation will be dismantled, completely removed and recycled. <i>Your farmer neighbors will be able to return to row crop agriculture or pursue the type of agricultural practice that best suits their farm needs at the time.</i> The decommissioning process (the take down and recycling of the project) is overseen by multiple Ohio agencies. The site will be fully revegetated as part of this process, as overseen by these same agencies.
Who would hold a decommissioning bond?	The Treasurer of State holds the decommissioning bond.

Frequently Asked Questions from Birch Solar Project Public Information Meetings, November 2020

Question	Answer
Loss of Farmland	
Is it a concern that we're losing farmland to solar?	Urban sprawl and rural subdividing are the primary contributors to loss of farm ground. Solar energy <i>temporarily sets aside farm ground</i> and protects it from permanent loss due to industrialization. The Birch Solar project will utilize just 0.02% of the more than 13.9 million acres of farmland in Ohio.
Does solar harm the soil for future farming?	<p>The solar project will actually improve the soil for future agriculture. Over the life of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil will be protected from erosion • Fewer chemicals will be utilized than farming • Practices such as grazing and pollinator plantings will increase biomass production, nitrogen content, soil carbon storage and soil moisture • "Resting" the ground can return it to a better condition at the end of the project's useful life, similar to fallowed parcels under USDA's Conservation Reserve Program
Birch Solar Specifics	
What's the benefit to the community if we're not the direct recipients of the electricity?	All solar projects collectively help decarbonize our country's electric grid and lower our country's overall electricity costs. Electricity flows like water in a pipe – the electricity from Birch Solar will flow into AEP's 345 kV grid and the PJM system. So, Birch Solar would help reduce pollution from electricity generation for the overall grid for homes and businesses in Ohio, with the economic benefits including tax money for schools, along with jobs, staying local.
What is the compensation planned for homeowners adjacent to the project?	<p>Lightsource bp is planning several voluntary initiatives that are not required by the OPSB permitting process. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments to adjacent landowners ranging from \$5000- \$50,000 depending on the proximity of the landowner to the project. These payments are one time and require no endorsement, confidentiality, or support of the project by the landowner. • Creation of a pollinator habitat to boost local biodiversity and foster wildlife habitat. • Maximization of agricultural integration through efforts that will employ Ohio farmers, such as sheep grazing. • Planting of trees to screen the solar project from neighbors' views, working with those neighbors on the landscape plans. • Selection of fencing that will better integrate with the rural landscape and wildlife.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on

2/12/2021 11:44:43 AM

in

Case No(s). 20-1605-EL-BGN

Summary: Application - 10 of 31 (Exhibit E – Frequently Asked Questions from Public Information Meetings) electronically filed by Christine M.T. Pirik on behalf of Birch Solar 1, LLC