

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application of )  
Yellowbud Solar, LLC for a Certificate of Environmental )  
Compatibility and Public Need for the Yellowbud )  
Switchyard Project )**

**Case No. 21-0329-EL-BLN**

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 (Board) rules. The accelerated certificate application in this case is subject to an automatic approval process as required by Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 4906.03 and Ohio Administrative Code 4906-6.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval May 28, 2021, unless suspended by the Board, an administrative law judge, or the chairperson or executive director of the Board for good cause shown. If suspended, the Board must render a decision on the application within 90 days from the date of suspension.

Please present any concerns you or your designee may have with this case to my office at least four business days prior to May 28, 2021, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Theresa White  
Executive Director  
Ohio Power Siting Board

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 21-0329-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Yellowbud Switchyard Project  
**Project Location:** Ross County  
**Applicant:** Yellowbud Solar, LLC  
**Application Filing Date:** April 29, 2021  
**Filing Type:** Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Date:** May 13, 2021  
**Report Date:** May 21, 2021  
**Recommended Automatic**  
**Approval Date:** May 28, 2021  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** A. Holderbaum, T. Crawford

### Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

**Application:** ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Approval with Conditions  
**Waiver:** ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Not Applicable

### Project Description and Need

Yellowbud Solar, LLC (Yellowbud or Applicant) proposes to build a 138-kilovolt (kV) switchyard and gen-tie line that would connect the proposed Yellowbud Solar Facility to the electrical distribution grid (the Yellowbud Switchyard).<sup>1</sup> The three circuit breaker switching station will be configured in a breaker-and-a-half bus arrangement but will be operated as a ring bus. This project includes addition of the switchyard structure, access roads, and the laydown yard needed during construction.

Upgrades to the transmission system are part of PJM Interconnection, LLC's (PJM) Regional Transmission Expansion Planning (RTEP) process.<sup>2</sup> The Applicant, with support of the PJM System Impact Study of December 2019 for PJM queue ID AC2-059, states that the project is needed to accommodate interconnection of the facility to the AEP Biers Run-Circleville 138 kV transmission line.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The application for the development of the 274-megawatt (MW) solar facility was approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board (Board) in case number 20-0972-EL-BGN.

2. PJM is the regional transmission organization charged with planning for upgrades to the regional transmission system in Ohio. Significant alterations to the transmission system located in the PJM control area are required to submit planned projects for review of system impacts.

3. <https://www.pjm.com/planning/services-requests/interconnection-queues>, Queue ID AC2-059, accessed May 3, 2021.

The Applicant has three PJM queue positions related to the Yellowbud Solar Facility. The positions, queue dates and power outputs are tabulated as follows.

PJM QUEUE FOR YELLOWBUD SOLAR PROJECT		
Queue ID	Queue Date	Power Output (MW)
AC2-059	2/16/2017	127
AD1-072	8/31/2017	20
AD2-016	11/15/2017	127
	Totals	274

PJM analyzed the interconnection as an injection into the electric grid through the AEP Biers Run-Circleville 138 kV transmission line. The 2021 Summer Peak was used in the analysis. The PJM System Impact Study of January 2020 for position AD2-016 identified the Harrison-Zuber 138 kV line overloads and the PJM Network Upgrades n6263.1 and n6263.2 required as new system reinforcements to resolve the overloads.<sup>4</sup> Network upgrades, Local Upgrades, or Merchant Network Upgrades identified pursuant to the Open Access Transmission Tariff (OATT), Parts II, III, and IV are paid for by the Interconnection Customer or Eligible Customer or voluntarily undertaken by a New Service Customer in fulfillment of an Upgrade Request.<sup>5</sup>

The Applicant proposes to begin construction approximately on September 1, 2021 with a currently expected in-service date of May 2022. The estimated capital cost for the project is \$8,000,000.<sup>6</sup>

## Nature of Impacts

### *Land Use*

Land use in the surrounding vicinity of the project includes agricultural and residential properties. The project is sited entirely on agriculture land. The Applicant has secured a purchase option for the proposed location of the project and states that it will execute the option prior to the start of construction. No other easements are necessary to construct and operate the proposed switchyard.

### *Cultural Resources*

The Applicant's consultant conducted an archaeological survey and an architectural history evaluation for the associated Yellowbud Solar Project. The Yellowbud Switchyard project is contained within the project area of the Yellowbud Solar Project. Based on the findings of the surveys, and related coordination efforts with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO), the Applicant entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OHPO. The MOU identified avoidance areas for archaeological resources and screening areas for architectural resources. No avoidance features were identified within the project area for the proposed

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4. <https://www.pjm.com/planning/services-requests/interconnection-queues.ashx>, accessed May 4, 2021.

5. PJM Manual 14B: PJM Region Transmission Planning Process, Revision 48, Effective Date: October 1, 2020.

6. The cost of \$8,000,000 includes approximate costs for all upgrades necessary to connect the Yellowbud Solar Project to the grid, including the switchyard infrastructure. Costs related specifically to the switchyard are anticipated to be approximately \$6,000,000. According to the Applicant, Yellowbud Solar must cover all upgrade costs to interconnect the project.

Yellowbud Switchyard. Additionally, no impacts to cultural resources are anticipated from the construction of the switchyard, access road, or temporary laydown area. Staff concurs with the survey results.

### *Surface Waters*

The project area did not contain any streams and no stream impacts would occur. Three wetlands were identified within the project area. None of the wetlands would be impacted during construction, and all facilities will be constructed outside of wetland boundaries. Additionally, no impacts to wetlands would occur during operation of the facility.

Construction stormwater impacts would be permitted under an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction Storm Water General Permit, which the Applicant would also submit prior to construction. Erosion control measures such as silt fencing may be used where appropriate to minimize runoff impacts to surface water resources. The project area is not in a floodplain.

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

Impacts to state and federal listed species would not occur due to no proposed in-stream work, tree clearing, or impacts to habitats of threatened or endangered wildlife within the project area.

## **Conclusion**

Staff's review of the application included consideration of the requirements listed in R.C. 4906.10. Based on Staff's review, the application meets the necessary criteria for granting a certificate on May 28, 2021. Staff recommends approval of this application subject to the following conditions. Staff notes that its recommendation for approval of this application should not be construed as a recommendation for approval of cost recovery in any ratemaking proceeding.

## **Conditions**

- (1) The certificate authority provided in this case shall not exempt the facility from any other applicable and lawful local, state, or federal rules or regulations nor be used to affect the exercise of discretion of any other local, state, or federal permitting or licensing authority with regard to areas subject to their supervision or control.
- (2) Prior to the commencement of construction activities in areas that require permits or authorizations by federal or state laws and regulations, the Applicant shall obtain and comply with such permits or authorizations. The Applicant shall provide copies of permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation, on the case docket prior to commencement of construction.
- (3) The Applicant shall file a notice of withdrawal dismissing this case from record or relinquish any certificate authority if the associated generation case, 20-0972-EL-BGN, is otherwise disposed of.
- (4) General construction activities shall be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., or until dusk when sunset occurs after 7:00 p.m. Impact pile driving shall be limited to the hours between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; hoe ram and blasting operations, if required, shall be limited to the hours between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Construction activities that do not involve noise increases above

ambient levels at sensitive receptors are permitted outside of daylight hours when necessary. The Applicant shall notify property owners or affected tenants within the meaning of Ohio Adm.Code 4906-3-03(B)(2) of upcoming construction activities including potential for nighttime construction.

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

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**5/21/2021 12:52:17 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 21-0329-EL-BLN**

Summary: Staff Report of Investigation electronically filed by Mr. Matt Butler on behalf of Staff of OPSB