

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the First Amendment Application of Big )**  
**Plain Solar, LLC to its Certificate of Environmental )**  
**Compatibility and Public Need for its Madison Solar ) Case No. 21-1196-EL-BGA**  
**Farm )**

Members of the Board:

Chair, Public Utilities Commission	Ohio House of Representatives
Director, Department of Development	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 application in this case is subject to an approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code (R.C.)

Sincerely,



Theresa White  
Executive Director  
Ohio Power Siting Board

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Project Name:** Madison Solar Farm  
**Case Number:** 21-1196-EL-BGA (associated with prior case nos. 19-1823-EL-BGN and 21-1174-EL-BLN)  
**Project Location:** Madison County  
**Applicant:** Big Plain Solar, LLC  
**Application Filing Date:** November 24, 2021  
**Inspection Date:** December 6, 2021  
**Report Date:** January 28, 2022  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** A. Conway, M. Bellamy, T. November

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

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

### Application Description

#### *Background*

In Case No. 19-1823-EL-BGN, Big Plain Solar, LLC (Applicant) requested to construct a solar electric generating facility, the Madison Solar Facility, that would consist of approximately 800,000 solar panels with a combined generation capacity of up to 196 megawatts (MW) in Madison County, Ohio. The Ohio Power Siting Board (Board or OPSB) issued the Madison Solar Facility application a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) on March 18, 2021.

In Case No. 21-1174-EL-BLN, the Applicant requested to construct a transmission line facility that would consist of three components: (1) an approximately 0.4-mile long 138 kilovolt (kV) generation interconnection (gen-tie) transmission line from the Madison Solar Facility project's collector substation to a new point of interconnection (POI) multi-breaker switchyard substation, (2) a POI multi-breaker switchyard station, and (3) a 100-foot long span of 138 kV transmission line connecting the POI multi-breaker switchyard substation to the existing American Transmission Systems, Inc. (ATSI) Beatty-London transmission line.

#### *Project Description*

In this case, the Applicant proposes to add an Operations and Maintenance (O&M) building, add a new access road location, and to change the proposed fence-type for the facility. No changes to the solar panels, electric collection lines, inverters, collector substation, laydown yard, fence line, or project area as originally proposed and approved in 19-1823-EL-BGN are requested.

The Applicant proposes that the O&M building would be a metal-sided, single-story building approximately 50 feet by 65 feet; the building would be located within a 6.7-acre portion of the laydown yard. This site would be office space and parking spaces for workers. The site would also serve as the permanent office for the Madison Solar Facility's plant operators and would also contain equipment needed to maintain and operate the solar generating facility.

The Applicant also proposes a new 0.45-mile-long access road to be located in the southeast corner of the project area.

The Applicant also proposes a new wildlife compatible fence surrounding the project, comprised of galvanized fixed knot wiring with varying mesh spacings, instead of a chain link fence. This fence would be eight feet tall.

The location of the O&M building and access road are shown in the maps of this report.

## **Application Review**

### *Aesthetics*

During its review of the original application, Staff analyzed the Applicant's viewshed analysis based upon an assumption of the maximum likely adverse aesthetic impacts. As a result, the Certificate requires that the Applicant incorporate a landscape and lighting plan to address the aesthetics and lighting of the facility with an emphasis on any locations where an adjacent non-participating parcel contains a residence with a direct line of sight to the project area. This condition requires that aesthetic impact mitigation include vegetative screening, fencing, or good neighbor agreements.

In this case, the Applicant proposes the use of a wildlife fence to surround the project, instead of the chain link fence that was proposed in the original application. This fence would be an eight feet tall galvanized fixed knot wiring fence. Staff believes this will be more fitting in a rural environment and supports the fencing change. With implementation of Staff's landscape and lighting condition from Case No. 19-1823-EL-BGN, the overall expected aesthetic impact would be minimal.

### *Cultural Resources*

The Applicant entered into a programmatic agreement which involves coordination with the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) to provide plans to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects of the project on cultural resources. The amended project includes 0.45-mile-long access road and an O&M building that are included the Madison Solar Facility project area.

The location of the O&M building and access road are both within previously investigated areas from the Phase I Archaeological Investigations for proposed Madison Solar Facility in Oak Run and Fairfield Townships, Madison County, Ohio report by Weller & Associates, Inc. (2020). The O&M building is located within Field 15 and the access road is located within Field 7. Previously identified Ohio Archaeological Inventory (OAI) site 33MA0598 is located within the proposed O&M building footprint. The OAI site 33MA0598 was determined to not be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in OHPO's coordination letter dated September 1, 2002. No archaeological sites were identified within the access road footprint. OHPO indicated that it has no concerns with the proposed locations of the O&M building and access road. Staff agrees with OHPO's conclusions.

### *Surface Waters*

No streams or wetlands were identified within the footprint of the proposed O&M building or the newly proposed access road. Furthermore, no permanent or temporary impacts are anticipated to surface waters from construction proposed by this amendment.

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

Consultation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) did not identify any concerns regarding impacts to listed plant or animal species due to a lack of suitable habitat within the footprint of the proposed O&M building and the proposed access road footprint. Furthermore, impacts to state and federally listed mussel and fish species would not occur due to no proposed in-water work. No tree clearing is anticipated for this amendment project, furthermore; the Applicant has committed to abide by ODNR and USFWS recommended tree clearing dates of October 1 through March 15 if tree clearing is deemed necessary for this project at any time. During the winter months, bats hibernate in caves and abandoned mines, also known as hibernacula. The proposed construction of the O&M building and access road is not expected to impact any bat hibernacula.

### *Agricultural Districts*

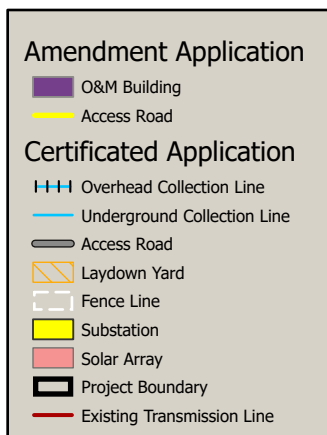
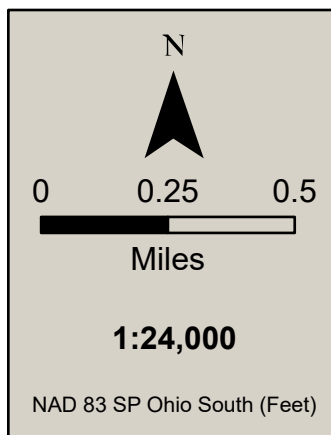
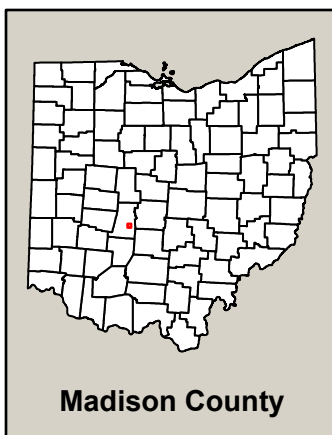
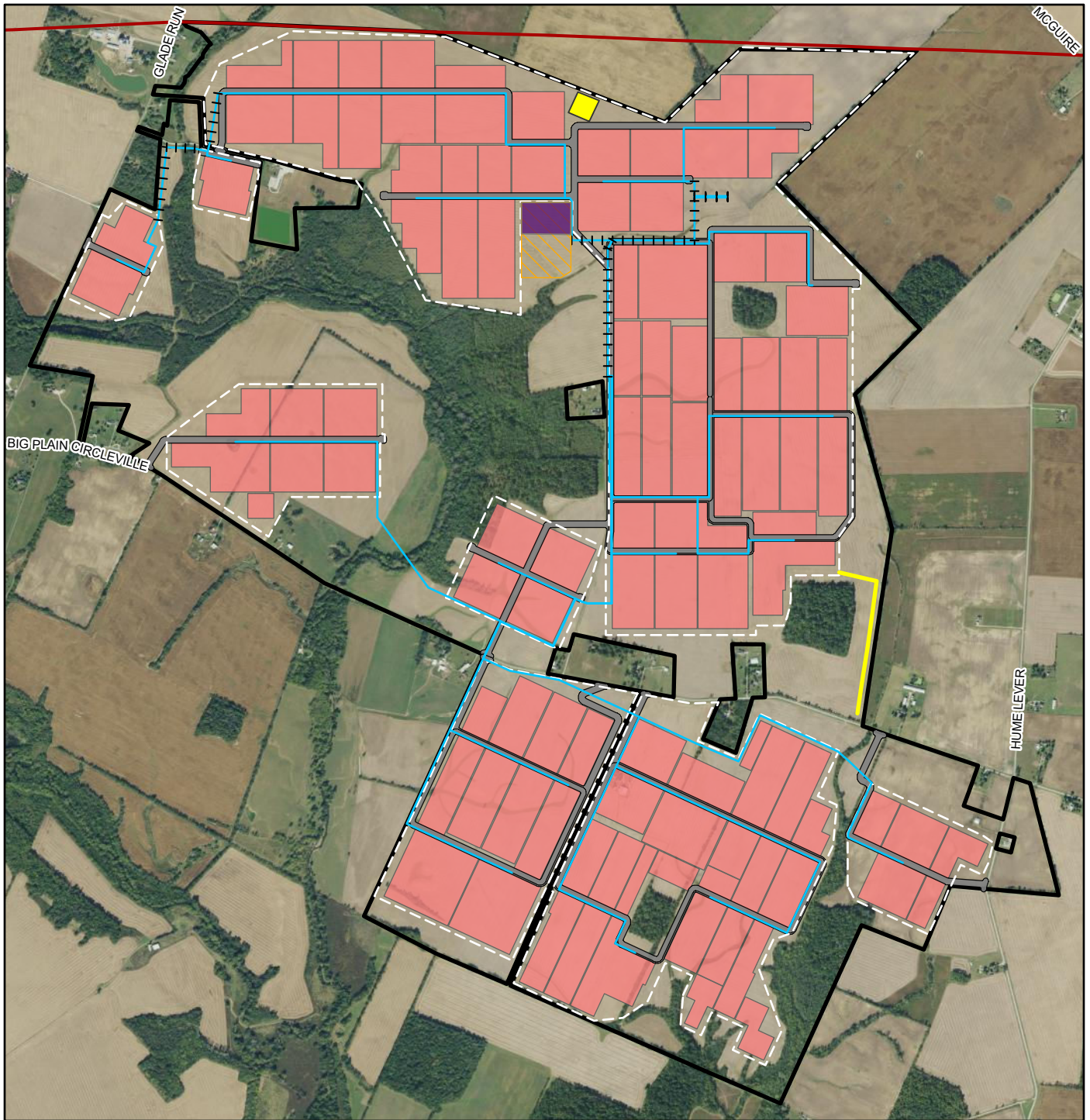
No agricultural districts would be impacted by the project as presented in the original application. This amendment also does not impact any agricultural districts. The new access roads and the new location of the O&M building would result in the permanent impacts of an additional 8.1 acres of agricultural land.

### **Recommended Findings**

Staff's review of the amendment application included consideration of the requirements listed in R.C. 4906.10. Based on Staff's review, the amendment application meets the necessary criteria for granting an amended certificate. Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed amendment to the Certificate, provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

### **Conditions**

- (1) The Applicant shall continue to adhere to all conditions as certificated in Case No. 19-1823-EL-BGN, as amended through this application.



## Overview Map

### 21-1196-EL-BGA

#### Big Plain Solar Amendment

Maps are presented solely for the purpose of providing a visual representation of the project in the staff report, and are not intended to modify the project as presented by the Applicant in its certified application and supplemental materials.

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

**Case No(s). 21-1196-EL-BGA**

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