

PPRP Fact Sheet – Casper Solar, Queen Anne’s County

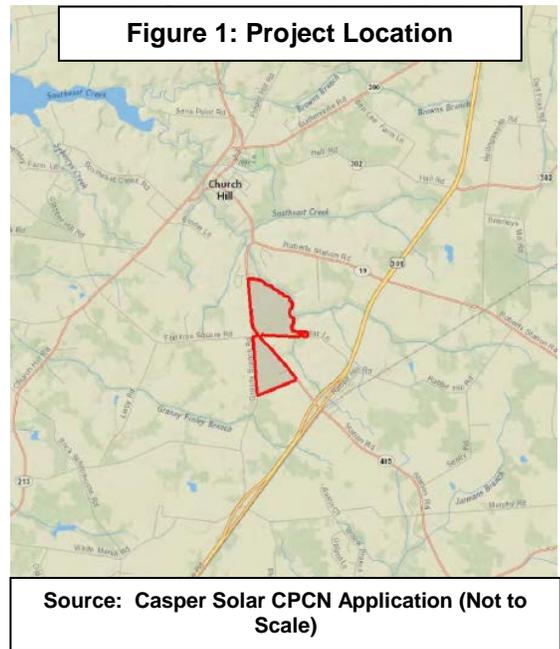
PSC Case Number 9450

Manager: Shawn Seaman
Last updated 30 August 2017

Project Overview:

Casper Solar Center, LLC (a subsidiary of Coronal Energy, LLC) has filed for a CPCN to construct and operate a 36.7 MW solar array in Queen Anne’s County (Figure 1). The Project will occupy a 360-acre property located 1.5 miles south/southeast of the town of Church Hill. Project components include:

- 150,000 photovoltaic (PV) modules mounted on a single axis horizontal tracking racking system;
- 15-22 power centers with DC to AC power inverters, medium voltage transformers, and associated equipment;
- A new substation and expansion of an existing substation; and
- Associated interconnection equipment including underground tie lines



Site Description

The Project will occupy approximately 360 acres across four parcels. The Applicant has entered a long-term lease agreement with the respective land owners to construct and operate the Project. The Project area currently consists primarily of agricultural and residential uses with farm fields, irrigation, and access roads (Figure 2). Solar panels will be placed on only two of the four parcels; the remaining two parcels will contain interconnection equipment. One of the parcels that will contain interconnection equipment already contains the Church Hill Solar Electrical Generating Station (SEGS).

The parcels are zoned Agricultural (AG) and more than 90% of the Project area is classified as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance. In Queen Anne’s County, utility-scale SEGS is considered a conditional use of land zoned AG, requiring approval by the Board of Appeals. The Applicant met with County staff in February 2017 to discuss the proposed Project. The Applicant subsequently submitted an application for conditional use approval.

Impact Assessment Highlights (based on the Applicant’s analysis)

Biological

- The Project area will develop only cleared land currently used for agriculture. With the exception of one portion of an underground tie line, forest and wetland areas and their respective buffers will be avoided.
- A review by DNR – Wildlife & Heritage Division indicated that some portions of the Site lie in Southeast Creek, which supports occurrences of two state and federally-listed endangered aquatic species. DNR recommended a 100-foot vegetated buffer from this stream to avoid adverse impacts to these species. One small portion of the buffer cannot be adhered to because DPL requires the project substation breaker to be within 500 feet of the substation.
- A portion of one underground tie line is proposed to be installed in an area where forest cover is present. The Applicant proposes to use specialized drilling techniques (i.e. jack and bore) to minimize disturbance of this area.
- The Site is located within the Priority Preservation Area Overlay.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Project is expected to create 100-120 temporary jobs. The Applicant anticipates the creation of three to four permanent jobs to maintain the Project.
- The Project consists of a capital investment between \$50 and \$55 million, leading to the creation of construction jobs, annual contributions to Queen Anne's County taxes, and a reduction in out-of-state energy imports.
- The Project will contribute to Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) solar carve-out.

Transportation

- Regular tractor-trailer deliveries of posts, framing, and panels are anticipated in the first two months. Throughout construction, daily construction traffic will include cars, pickup trucks, and other personal vehicles.
- Other equipment like dump trucks, trenching equipment, concrete trucks, front loaders, backhoes, post installation equipment, and excavators will also be needed at various times during construction.
- There are no airports located within 20 miles of the Project.

Visual impacts

- The Project will be enclosed by a 6-foot tall chain-link fence and a landscape buffer in accordance with Queen Anne's County Planning and Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant will submit a detailed landscape plan that will incorporate a 25-foot vegetated buffer for screening from adjacent properties.
- No tree clearing is proposed for the Project, and existing vegetative screening will be maintained.
- The Applicant examined all residential structures within 1,000 feet for glare from the Project. According to the CPCN Application, the results of the analysis show that no glare is found for any of the subject observation points.

Cultural & Aesthetic

- The Project is located in the Stories of the Chesapeake Certified Heritage Area (CHA) and PPRP has reached out to Eastern Shore Heritage, Inc. to assist in the review of potential effects to the CHA.
- One property located on one of the parcels is listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and two other parcels are within the National Register-eligible Fincastle-Hewitt Survey District. The Applicant is undertaking recommended cultural resource assessments following an initial review by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT).

Other

- The Project is located adjacent to an existing solar power generation facility known as Church Hill Solar Farm. PPRP has reached out to the Applicant regarding the relationship between the two projects.

CPCN Status

- CPCN Application filed on 4/25/17.
- A Notice of Procedural Schedule was filed on 5/30/17.
- Applicant's direct testimony was filed on 7/14/17.
- For more current information, see: <http://www.psc.state.md.us/>