

KLICKITAT COUNTY
DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE (DS)
AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS
Bluebird Solar Project
EOZ2020-01 AND SEP2020-17

Name of Proposal: Bluebird Solar Project

Description of proposal

Aurora Solar, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Avangrid Renewables, LLC, proposes to develop a 100-megawatt (MW) solar energy facility about 26 miles east of Goldendale, and five miles north of State Highway 14. The applicant is considering various layouts within a larger “Solar Facility Siting Area” containing approximately 1,638 acres. The Solar Facility Siting Area would overlap with portions of the Big Horn Wind Facility. The fenced area is comprised of approximately 700 acres and would include solar modules, inverters, I-beam steel posts, fencing, 20-ft wide gravel roads and a collector substation located across Big Horn Road from the Big Horn gen-tie line. No onsite battery energy storage system is proposed.

The project will consist of the following components:

- The solar modules use crystalline cells to generate electricity by converting sunlight into direct current electrical energy. The project would utilize solar modules connected in series to form long rows. The rows of modules would then be connected together via combiners, cables, and switchboards. The configuration of multiple rows can vary depending on the equipment type and topography.
- Strings of solar modules would be mounted on single-axis tracker systems that optimize electricity production by rotating the solar modules to follow the path of the sun throughout the day. As the solar modules turn throughout the day, the height of their top edges will shift accordingly. The solar modules would have a maximum height of 14 feet when rotated to their full extent. Each tracker would be supported by multiple steel posts, which could be round hollow posts or pile-type posts. The steel posts would be installed by drilling 6” holes into shallow bedrock (surface to 3 feet of soil) and driving posts into the bedrock holes.
- Low voltage cabling would connect the solar modules of each tracker string in series and combine multiple strings to a single combiner box. Cabling from multiple combiner boxes would connect to a single inverter, which would convert the direct current to alternating current and connect to the above ground or buried collection system.
- The project would utilize either the current Big Horn operation and maintenance (O&M) building, or a new 5,000-square-foot O&M building within the siting area.
- The project would use existing roads to the extent practicable. New access roads would be constructed in accordance with the Klickitat County Code Title 12 standards.

- A 8-foot chain link perimeter fence would enclose the solar energy generation facility.
- The project would be connected to the existing Big Horn Wind Farm 230-kV Gen-Tie line, which runs on the east side of Big Horn Road. The Big Horn gen-tie line connects to the larger energy grid via BPA's Spring Creek switchyard located northwest of the Project.

Final solar modules configuration would be sited in accordance with industry standards and safety measures and environmental constraints identified during this EIS process.

Proponent

Aurora Solar, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Avangrid Renewables, LLC

Location of proposal

The project area would be located about 26 miles east of Goldendale, Washington, and about 5 miles north of State Highway 14. The Solar Facility Siting Area would overlap with portions of the Big Horn wind facility. The project is located within Sections 9, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 22, Township 5 North, Range 20 East, WM, Klickitat County, Washington.

Lead agency

Klickitat County Planning Department

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is being prepared in keeping with the requirements of RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c). The Applicant has elected to prepare an EIS for this project.

Two alternatives are being addressed in this EIS: 1) A *No Action* alternative will address the effects of no government action, under which the proposed project would not occur, and 2) An *Action* alternative will address the effects of the proposed project as proposed by Aurora Solar LLC.

The following topics will be addressed in the EIS: project description, land use, vegetation and wildlife, critical areas, visual resources, cultural resources, noise, transportation, public safety, public services and utilities, construction, critical areas in accordance with the Critical Areas Ordinance and cumulative impacts. The project will also address the development standards outlined in Chapter 19.39 of the Klickitat County Code. The applicant will prepare special technical studies addressing wildlife and habitat (including avian resources), cultural resources, grading and stormwater management and other applicable studies.

Scoping. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required.

Comments on the scope of the EIS will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. July 30, 2021. Comments shall be submitted to the Klickitat County Planning Department, 228 West Main, Goldendale, WA 98620 or via email to planning@klickitatcounty.org

Community Meeting. Aurora Solar, LLC will be hosting an in-person only community meeting on Thursday, July 8, 2021 beginning at 6pm at the Bickleton Grange Hall (304 E Market Street, Bickleton, WA). At the meeting, the applicant will provide information on the proposed project, and answer questions from the public.

Responsible official: Mo-chi Lindblad

Position/title: Planning Director, Klickitat County Planning Department

Phone: 509.773.5703

Address: 228 West Main Street, Goldendale, WA 98620

Date: 6/24/2021 Signature 

You may appeal this determination of significance.

Appeals on the Determination of Significance (DS) will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. July 16, 2021. Appeals must be filed with the Board of County Commissioners and the Klickitat County Auditor. Appeals shall not be deemed complete without payment of the appeal fee applicable to a Class C project, payable to the Klickitat County Planning Department. Appeals shall be in writing and state with specificity the basis for the appeal and the errors to be asserted.

There is no agency appeal.