

Note:
This summary was last updated on **Sept. 20, 2023**
For current information, follow this link:
[PSC Docket Case #9710](#)

Porter Mill Solar

Near intersection of Route 50 and Porter Mill Rd., Hebron (Wicomico County)

[PSC Case #9710](#)

PPRP Case Manager: Ginny Rogers

Note:
This summary is based on
information provided in the CPCN
Application filed with the PSC on
June 29, 2023, which is subject to
change and has not yet been fully
reviewed by PPRP.

CPCN Timeline

- CPCN Application filed on June 29, 2023**
- Applicant's Filed Direct Testimony Due: October 25, 2023**
- 1st Public Hearing: November 1, 2023**
- Intervenors' Direct Testimony Due: February 20, 2024**
- 2nd Public Hearing: Between Feb. 26-28, 2024**
- Settlement Status Update: February 29, 2024**
- PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if settlement is reached): March 5, 2024**

Project Location:

The Porter Mill Solar Project (Project) will be located on two parcels totaling 398.94 acres in Hebron, Maryland (Figure 1) in Wicomico County. [Google Map Link](#). Per the Applicant, the approximate limit of disturbance (LOD) for the Project will be 356.75 acres.

Project Overview:

Porter Mill, LLC (Applicant) has applied for a CPCN to construct a 45.80 MW AC solar array in Wicomico County.

Project components include:

- Approximately 92,771 photovoltaic (PV) modules mounted on a single-axis tracking racking system;
- Interconnection equipment; (interconnection feeder line from Hebron Substation to be constructed by DPL);
- 15 inverter skids, each containing 1 inverter and 1 liquid AC transformer;
- 1 onsite substation containing switchgear.



Site Description

The two parcels that comprise the Project site include agricultural fields and wooded areas within both residential and commercial zoning districts. The Town of Hebron permits utility-scale solar in all zoning districts by special exception. The Applicant states that, based on discussions with the Town of Hebron, it has excluded approximately 15 acres along Rt. 50 from the LOD for future commercial development, and that the Town has expressed support for the Project. Approximately 86% of the land within the Project's 268.37-acre limit of construction (LOC) is considered Prime Farmland. Surrounding land uses include woodland, agriculture, residential, and commercial. The Applicant's Environmental Review Document (ERD) notes that irrigation systems and associated wells are present at the Project site and will be abandoned. The Applicant completed a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment that identified 4 former underground storage tanks (USTs) adjacent to the Project site. Records indicate that these USTs have been removed and remediation has been performed at the adjacent site.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Biological

- The Applicant's ERD states that no tree clearing is planned.
- The Applicant identified a wooded area, wetlands, and three drainage ditches on the Project parcel, but states that the LOD avoids these features. A Priority Forest Conservation Area, which includes the wooded area, stream, and wetlands, on the southern border of the parcel, was originally a part of the LOD, but the property owner preferred to keep that area outside of the LOD. The Applicant states that the Project will include a 35-foot buffer from the dripline of trees and around wetlands and that the Project LOD is more than 100 feet from any mapped blue line streams.

- The Priority Forest Conservation Area, while not inside the LOD, is directly adjacent to the Project Area. This sensitive area is known to house Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) and is adjacent to a Green Infrastructure hub. This area is also part of Tier 4 (moderately significant) and Tier 5 (significant) sections in the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet).
- The Project is not located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area or any Tier II catchments. The site drains to an unnamed tributary of Rewastico Creek, which flows into the Nanticoke River watershed.
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and DNR determined there are no official records for listed rare, threatened, or endangered (RTE) plant or animal species within the Project site. There is a documented presence of Mud Sunfish in Rewastico Creek; however, this species has been delisted and therefore, does not have any regulated protections. The USFWS has determined there are no critical habitats, refuge lands, or fish hatcheries within the Project area.
- The ERD states that electrical interconnections that cross internal drainage ditches on the site will be installed via horizontal directional drilling to avoid impacts to the drainage system onsite.
- The ERD states that the Project will add approximately 7.26 acres of impervious surface.

Noise Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that the only noise generated during operation of the electrical equipment at the facility will be from the transformers, inverters, and onsite substation. The Applicant's ERD states that the closest residential dwelling is approximately 175 feet away from the proposed onsite substation and 320 feet away from the closest inverter pad.

Visual Impacts

- The panel arrays will be enclosed and protected using a 6-foot chain-link fence with 1-foot of 3 strand barbed wire.
- The Applicant proposes to install landscape buffers along Porter Mill Road, Old Railroad Road, and W. Church Street.
- The Applicant's ERD states that the Project will maintain a 75-foot setback from the center line of named roads along with a 35-foot landscape buffer. The Applicant also states that the Project will maintain a 50-foot building setback.
- The Applicant's ERD identified 8 airports and heliports within 10 miles of the Project. The Applicant has consulted with the Federal Aviation Administration and Maryland Aviation Administration, and both have determined the Project is not an obstruction or hazard to air navigation, and there will be no glare effects to any nearby airports.

Cultural Resource Impacts

- The Applicant's ERD states that within 1 mile of the Project site there are 5 properties on the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) Inventory of Historic Properties and 3 properties on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The ERD further states that, following Phase I and Phase II archaeological investigations, the MHT has determined that the Project will have no effect on historic properties.

Public Safety and Transportation

- During construction, major material and equipment will be delivered by tractor-trailers and offloaded by construction vehicles. After construction, traffic will mostly be limited to maintenance crews for seasonal mowing and vegetation maintenance as well as maintenance for any operational issues.
- The Project will include a perimeter road for emergency vehicle access or other access lanes as approved by the State Fire Marshal.

Economic and Fiscal

- The Applicant estimates that the Project will create 75 to 100 design, management, and construction jobs during the construction period.
- The Applicant indicates that the Project represents a capital investment of approximately \$60 million.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Avoided

- The Applicant reviewed the Project's impact to greenhouse gas emissions using the AVoided Emissions and geneRation Tool (AVERT) model. The model results indicate that the Project would reduce CO₂ emissions in Maryland by approximately 3,350 tons per year and an additional 1,847 tons per year in the PJM area.