



## **HECATE CIDER SOLAR FARM PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE Q&A**

### **Summary of Open Forums Held October 21, 2020, 1-3 PM and 5-7 PM**

#### **Q: Who is Hecate Energy LLC?**

Hecate Energy (Hecate) is a leading developer, owner, and operator of renewable power projects and storage solutions in North America and select international markets. Hecate is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois and has offices in Los Angeles, California, Columbus, Ohio, Connecticut, and regional representation in New York. Hecate's team for the Cider Solar Farm has worked together for more than 25 years on developing thousands of megawatts of electricity generation projects across the U.S. and is among the top 10 solar developers in the United States today.

#### **Q: Will Hecate Energy receive public funds to construct the Project? Will Hecate operate the Project?**

No. Hecate has not received any money from New York State or other public funding source for this Project. Hecate uses private funds for the development and construction of the Project.

Depending on partner investors, Hecate may or may not be involved in the operational phase of the Project. Contractual obligations made in the permitting phase must be respected through the life of the Project regardless of the Project's ownership interests.

#### **Q: Where will the proposed Project be located?**

Hecate is currently studying an approximately 7,000-acre area situated to the north of the Village of Oakfield, Village of Elba, and approximately five miles north of the City of Batavia in Genesee County. Not all of the lands within this area will be included in the final Project layout; rather, these 7,000 acres represent a broader area to be studied and in which select areas would eventually be used to site solar panels and associated infrastructure. This allows the Hecate team to learn about the site's wetlands, cultural resources, visual resources, wildlife habitat, and other sensitive resources in order to avoid them during the design phase. Public feedback also is a key factor in determining the refined area in which the Project will ultimately be sited, which is anticipated to be approximately 3,000 to 4,000 acres.

Once finalized, Hecate will make the Project layout available for public consumption.

#### **Q: Why is the Project being sited in New York?**

New York State, through the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, has set ambitious and comprehensive goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the State by 2030. Part of the State's strategy is to have 70 percent of its energy consumption from renewable generation by 2030.

#### **Q: How long will Project construction last?**

Project construction is expected to commence 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2022 and would occur over an 18-month to two-year period, ending in 2024. Once construction begins, it is anticipated that the presence of construction crews will gradually increase, with the bulk of the construction work occurring over a 12-month period. Construction activities over the final three to six months will then gradually decrease. During construction, crews will move from section to section by installing posts, followed by panels, wiring, and other Project equipment. A comprehensive construction management plan will be developed and adhered to over the entire construction phase of the Project. The plan will include a code of conduct for construction workers.



Pre-construction field efforts to study wetlands, wildlife, visual resources, cultural resources, and other sensitive resources were commenced in July 2020 and/or will continue to intermittently occur between now and February 2021. Hecate will contact landowners in advance of accessing properties for survey work.

**Q: How will the solar panels be maintained? How will crews respond in the event of a fire or other emergency?**

Maintenance activities would occur through the life of the Project but are anticipated to be minimal. Crews will typically come out within 24 hours to fix equipment provided that there are no imminent safety concerns.

Solar panel components are not composed of flammable nor radioactive materials. While extremely unlikely, the primary source of a potential fire could occur at the substation connection of wires by inverters and transformers. Hecate also will be providing emergency response training to the local fire departments to respond in the unlikely event of a fire. These trainings also are anticipated to assist in fire department response to individual home solar panels within the community.

**Q: How long will the Project be here? Will the Project be removed?**

The solar panels selected for this Project run “fuel free” and have an efficiency performance guaranty of 25 to 30 years. Once operation of the Project concludes, the equipment is required to be decommissioned and removed from the site according to New York State permitting requirements. Decommissioning bond funds will be established in advance of decommissioning to ensure that proper decommissioning processes are completed.

**Q: How will the Project benefit the local community?**

The Project is anticipated to contribute tens of millions of dollars over its life directly to local and regional sources, such as schools, to local governments, fire departments, ambulance companies, and libraries. Indirect benefits also will include economic benefits by boosting the area’s economy, creating full-time equivalent construction jobs, and creating an economic stimulus for local businesses. Hecate looks forward to further discussion with the communities to discuss benefits and balancing the needs of economic benefit with maintaining the character of the community.

**Q: Where will the construction labor force come from?**

Hecate’s construction contractor will seek to utilize local labor sources for construction jobs associated with the Project. As discussed, it is anticipated that the local economy will benefit from the creation of jobs and associated local spending. Hecate also is currently using local consultants for surveys and other field-based work.

**Q: Who benefits from the Project? Where does the electricity get used?**

Electricity (electrons) produced by a solar facility that hits the NY energy grid will travel to the nearest electricity demand load. For example, if electrons enter the grid in Genesee County, electricity will be first used by downstream energy users in Genesee County. If Genesee County’s downstream users do not use all of the power generated by the Project, the remaining power would be used elsewhere. Electrons produced by the Project could help offset electrons from coal plants in the area, improving the grid in the region with more renewable electrons.

Through grid modeling, Hecate understands that, as generation capacity is added to a certain region on the energy grid, the congestion of wires helps reduce the power prices, which slightly decreases the cost of power in that region. Hecate is exploring programs to provide electricity from the Project directly to local communities through various wholesale agreement options.

**Q: Will the Project impact the wildlife and wildlife habitat?**

Hecate understands that large mammal (e.g., deer) movement is common throughout the local area and that hunting is a popular recreational activity. While deer may be displaced from areas on which solar panels are sited or other fenced-in areas, adjacent areas and various corridors within the Project site will still be available to wildlife. It is Hecate's experience that deer do not typically jump into fenced areas associated with solar development.

Hecate has prepared a wildlife site characterization study and is currently consulting with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Renewable Energy Siting on potential habitat impacts from the Project. This study will be made available to the public at the time of permit application filing.

Hecate studied sensitive habitats within five miles of the Project and is cognizant of the Project's location in proximity to the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. From an operational standpoint, no Project activities are anticipated to have impacts on bald eagles that may occupy the area.

**Q: Will wooded areas be cleared for the placement of solar panels?**

To the extent practicable, Hecate will avoid tree clearing practices through the careful siting of solar panels, as described above. The Project will use underground collection cables, where possible, to minimize the need for tree clearing. In areas where tree clearing would occur, Hecate will employ practices to minimize or mitigate impacts to forested areas. Hecate also believes in working with local landowners to identify areas of concern where tree clearing should be avoided.

Once finalized, Hecate will make the Project layout available for public consumption.

**Q: Will the Project impact water quality?**

Unlike conventional power plants, operating solar facilities use little to no water. During operation, water use is anticipated to include occasional cleaning of solar panels, once every few years. It is likely that water would be trucked in for these purposes.

**Q: Will I be able to hear the solar farm equipment from my backyard? What about glare from panels?**

Impacts from noise due to the solar panels are expected to be negligible. During the day, if standing within 24 inches of a panel, a small "clicking" noise every 90 seconds may be observed as the panels follow the sun. During the night, these mechanisms are turned off. Hecate is also in the process of performing a noise study for the Project, which takes into consideration potential sensitive receptors.

Modern solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight and only reflect approximately 2% of light, which is consistent with the amount of light that is reflected on water and less than soil or even wood shingles. Hecate plans to site the Project with single axis tracking panels that move with the sun to receive the most direct sunlight during the year. The design feature will minimize glare impacts. While impacts from glare would be considered negligible, as part of Hecate's permitting requirements, Hecate will be undergoing a glint and glare study which takes into consideration the location of homes relative to panels. This analysis will be shared with the public once completed.

**Q: Will the Project impact visual resources? Who is responsible for landscaping once panels are installed?**

The solar panels will stand approximately 10 feet high (about the height of field corn stalks). A planting and screening plan will be developed by Hecate's landscape architect subcontractor to minimize impacts to local viewsheds. The planting plan would be developed in advance of Project construction as part of Hecate's permitting requirements where plantings will be completed in accordance with State and/or local laws.

Hecate's subcontractor will be required to check the status of plantings after one year of installation and will be responsible for maintaining plantings over the life of the Project. Hecate also is committed to collaborating with local landowners to develop a landscaping design that mitigates visual concerns and blends into the surrounding environment.

**Q: Will the Project remove available farmland?**

While solar panels temporarily displace opportunities for traditional agricultural practices, Hecate is exploring options for co-productive agricultural opportunities, including sheep grazing, establishing pollinator habitat, and other continuing agricultural uses. Hecate looks forward to collaborating with local landowners on these co-productive agricultural opportunities.

**Q: Will the Project impact property values?**

In Hecate's research, solar projects have not been shown to impact property values nor homeowners insurance rates.

**Q: Will there be more opportunities for public engagement? How will Hecate handle outreach during COVID-19?**

Hecate plans to hold another public informational open house prior to filing a permit application, which is anticipated to occur in February 2021. Hecate will consider additional outreach methods (e.g., posters, etc.) in addition to the mailings sent for this open house opportunity. Hecate also has weekly Zoom meetings on Wednesdays scheduled at 1:00 p.m. ET to provide opportunities for the public to ask questions about the Project. More detail regarding these meetings can be found at [www.cidersolar.com](http://www.cidersolar.com). Questions can also be emailed to [CiderSolar@HecateEnergy.com](mailto:CiderSolar@HecateEnergy.com).

Hecate looks forward to collaborating on effective ways to interact with the local community, particularly given limitations due to COVID-19. If and when COVID-19 restrictions ease, Hecate plans to have an increased local presence to interact with community members.