



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Lon Roberts, Chairperson
Mike Huebsch, Commissioner
Rich Zipperer, Commissioner

4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

December 11, 2018

Re: Application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity of Two Creeks Solar, LLC to Construct an Electric Tie Line to Connect a Solar Electric Generation Facility to the Existing Transmission System, to be Located in Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties, Wisconsin

9696-CE-101

To the Person Addressed:

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) received an application from Two Creeks Solar, LLC (Two Creeks) for the construction of an electric tie line to connect a new solar facility to the existing transmission grid. The Commission also received an application from Two Creeks to construct the new solar electric generation facility and associated facilities. The proposed project is located in the towns of Two Creeks and Two Rivers in Manitowoc County and the town of Carlton in Kewaunee County. The Commission is sending this letter to property owners directly along the proposed routes of the tie line or near the proposed solar facility site, as well as individuals who have asked to be placed on our mailing list. It is also being sent to public officials who may wish to place this notification in a location where it can be viewed by the public.

This is a Type II action under Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 4.10(2). It requires the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) to determine if an environmental impact statement (EIS) is necessary under Wis. Stat. § 1.11. Commission staff from the Division of Energy Regulation completed an environmental review of the proposed project routes and prepared an EA to determine if an EIS is necessary. A notification of the Commission's intent to prepare an EA, including a solicitation for comments on the environmental aspects of this project, was mailed to landowners, local and regional media, affected municipal entities, the regional planning commission, and area legislators along the proposed routes on September 18, 2018.

The preliminary determination indicates that no significant impacts on the human or natural environment are likely to occur as a result of the construction and operation of this project for either of the routes under consideration. Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required. Comments regarding this determination can be directed to the contact person listed at the end of this letter. The remainder of this letter describes the primary impacts of the route options and summarizes the conclusions of the EA. To obtain a copy of the EA, please request a copy from the contact person listed at the end of this letter.

Proposed Project

Two Creeks is proposing a 150 megawatts photovoltaic (PV) solar electric generation facility and associated generator tie line. The project would be located on approximately 1,300 acres of

primarily agricultural land in Manitowoc and Kewaunee counties. The solar PV array would interconnect to a new 138 kilovolt (kV) project collector substation north of the primary array using a 34.5 kV underground collection system. At the collector substation, the voltage would be stepped up from 34.5 kV to 138 kV.

The proposed 138 kV generator tie line would run approximately 4.5 miles from the Two Creek solar facilities' collector substation to the Kewaunee Switchyard located adjacent to the Kewaunee Nuclear Plant where it would interconnect to the existing electric grid. The 138 kV generator tie line would be constructed on a new right of way (ROW), and Two Creeks has acquired the easements necessary for construction along the proposed routes. Most of the ROW would be 150 feet wide, with approximately the last 0.8 mile having a 100-foot ROW. A range of structures could be used, including steel monopole, wooden three-pole, or steel H-frame, depending on engineering or site requirements. There would be one circuit, made up of three conductors, placed on these new structures.

The properties needed for the project would be leased from landowners. Two Creeks would develop, construct, and operate the generation facility. In a separate docket before the Commission,¹ Madison Gas and Electric and Wisconsin Public Service Corporation propose to purchase the Two Creeks solar generation facility and tie line, as well as an additional proposed solar electric generation facility in Iowa County, Wisconsin.

From the collector substation, the proposed generator tie line project would share one corridor for approximately 2.25 miles. At a point just south of State Highway 42, there are two proposed route options. The application refers to a "primary" and an "alternate" route option. The primary route turns east from the end of the shared route for approximately 300 feet, crossing beneath an existing ATC 345 kV line, before turning north. The primary route would continue north and northeast for approximately 1.8 miles before turning east to go into the Kewaunee switchyard after crossing Nuclear Road. The alternate route would continue straight north from the end of the shared route for approximately 1.4 miles, would turn east for approximately 575 feet, then turn north again for approximately 1,600 feet before turning east towards the Kewaunee switchyard after crossing Nuclear Road.

Potential Natural Resource and Social Impacts

Each proposed route would cause environmental impacts based on the surrounding land use, habitats, and features such as wetlands, waterways, or presence of rare species. During construction activities, there would be increased noise, dust, and vibration in the construction areas. There would be increased traffic in the project area as employees and deliveries arrive and leave the project work areas. Loose or disturbed soils could be susceptible to erosion. Animals and vegetation in the project area could be displaced or damaged as a result

¹ Docket 5-BS-228

of construction activities. There would be temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands, although if constructed as described in the application, these would be minor.

Permanent visual impacts will depend on where the tie line is located. The tie line would start at the new collector substation, east of state highway 42, and run north for about a half mile before turning east. It would proceed for approximately 0.3 miles before turning north again, running next to an existing 345 kV transmission line. Where the tie line would be located in new ROW, there would be greater visual impacts, but where it would run adjacent to existing lines, if the span lengths could be matched, it would be less intrusive on the landscape.

Most of the land crossed by the two proposed routes is in agricultural production. Typical impacts that could be expected during construction in agricultural lands include damage to drainage tiles, crop damage, soil compaction, and damage to fences. After construction, an electric transmission line is generally compatible with agricultural land that is in row crop production. The tie line structures would be obstacles to cultivation, and when two or more lines are adjacent there can be increased difficulties cultivating around structures. Two Creeks and its contractors should work with landowners or agricultural operators to identify features to avoid during construction and the timing of agricultural operations to reduce or mitigate impacts.

When a transmission line ROW crosses natural habitats, such as wetlands or woodlands, woody vegetation is typically cleared. The effects associated with the proposed generator tie line would be slightly different from other transmission lines in the state, because Two Creeks proposes constructing the tie line over areas of forested wetlands, rather than clearing the ROW of woody vegetation. This decision may affect future operation and management of the line and its ROW. Transmission lines can be a hazard to large birds flying through the area, particularly if there is low visibility. Two Creeks proposes to follow best management practices to mitigate this risk to birds in the area that may be migrating, or moving to and from Lake Michigan from surrounding fields.

Conclusion

No significant environmental effects are expected to result from the proposed project along either of the potential routes as described with stated construction methods and mitigation plans. A number of temporary impacts similar to those seen on other transmission line projects would likely occur during the construction phase. The addition of the new tie line would create long term effects, primarily in agricultural lands.

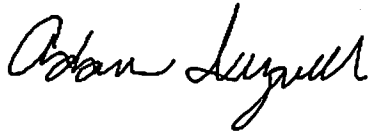
No significant impacts on the human environment that would warrant the preparation of an EIS are expected if this project is constructed along either of the route alternatives. Thus, preparation of an EIS, as described in Wis. Stat. § 1.11, is not required for this project.

To the Person Addressed
Docket 9696-CE-101
Page 4

Copies of the EA are available upon request, either in electronic or paper format (for a paper copy, an address must be provided). Requests for a copy of the EA should be made to Adam Ingwell at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin by telephone at (608) 267-9197, by e-mail at adam.ingwell@wisconsin.gov, or by regular mail directed to the Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 7854, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7854.

Comments on the finding of no significant impact for this proposed project should be made to Adam Ingwell at the address above, by email, or through the Commission's web comment form. Go to the Commission's web site at <http://psc.wi.gov>, click on "File a Comment" button. On the next page, select the "File a comment" link that appears for docket number 9696-CE-101.

All comments must be received by Monday January 7, 2019.



Adam Ingwell
Environmental Affairs Coordinator – Supervisor
Division of Energy Regulation

AI:STS:jar:DL: 01658060