



Project Key Facts

Energix Westlake, LLC is developing a 20 megawatt (MW) proposed solar farm located on an approximately 220 acres near Westlake Corner, Franklin County, VA.



Location



The Westlake Solar project is located on approximately 220 acres of private property in Westlake Corner in Franklin County. Around 100 acres will be utilized for solar array placement. The project site was carefully selected due to existing utility impacts to the land, including the existing distribution line that bisects the property and a nearby substation, reducing the need for further impacts. Approximately 5% of the project's parcels are wetlands, which will be designated by the US Army Corps of Engineers and avoided by the project design according to its regulations .

Zoning



The project requires a Franklin County Conditional Use Permit application to be reviewed with a public hearing by the County's Planning Commission with a recommendation to the County's Board of Supervisors. A Board of Supervisors public hearing and decision will follow. With approvals, construction activities could begin in early 2022.

Buffers & Setbacks



Buffers and setbacks designed to minimize the visual impact of the solar farm are an important component of the Westlake Solar project. Features include a 100-foot setback along the property boundaries, 30-foot from wetlands, 150-foot from neighboring dwellings, and a 200-foot setback from Betty's Creek. Landscaping and screening will be provided along these roads and adjacent properties, where applicable. This will screen the project from view, maintain the existing character of the area, and help eliminate audible noise outside the project area.

Wildlife



Westlake Solar will obtain an environmental permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). As part of the permit process, the impact on threatened and endangered species is evaluated and mitigation plans, if needed, are developed. In addition, fencing will only be placed in areas where there are solar panels, and so a significant portion of the site will be NOT be fenced which will provide wildlife corridors and wetland habitats available to native animals.

Vegetation Management



The design of the Westlake Solar Project includes landscaping and buffers which will screen the project from view and maintain the existing character of the area. Our development process includes an evaluation of the existing vegetation, in conformance with the County land development code, and will pursue opportunities to establish ground cover with native species. In addition, a Vegetation and Screening Plan will be prepared and reviewed by the County.

Maintenance of vegetation is typically managed through a contract with a local Virginia-licensed, third-party local landscaping firm. Mowing is the primary method for maintenance; however, pollinator plantings may also be used. Solar panels at the Westlake Solar project will move with or "track" the sun throughout the day. The movement of the panels allows for mowers to reach about 99% of the grass underneath the panels, thereby avoiding the use of harmful chemicals.

Water



It is not anticipated that any water will be necessary to operate the solar project. The proprietary design of First Solar modules allows for self-cleaning with rain. Unlike other parts of the country, and based on experience, rainfall in Virginia is sufficient to keep panels clean and vegetation on site thriving.

Property Values



The design of the Westlake Solar Project includes various features including significant setbacks from property boundaries, landscaping and buffers which will screen the project from view and maintain the existing character of the area. In short, Westlake Solar will be a good neighbor – you won't see it, smell it or hear it. Furthermore, a recent property value impact study for the project concluded that matched pair analysis shows no impact in home values due to abutting or adjoining a solar farm as well as no impact to abutting or adjacent vacant residential or agricultural land with visual barriers and distances like what is proposed here.

Safety



Solar Panels: The First Solar photovoltaic modules that will be used at the solar farm are safe, proven technology with over 200,000,000 modules deployed worldwide in about 18,000 solar projects. They've been designed and tested for durability in a range of conditions including hurricane-force winds and fires. In the unlikely event of breakage, the cadmium telluride (CdTe) semiconductor material remains inert, which means there is no potential for CdTe to leach into the ground or water. It's important to note that cadmium telluride is not the same as cadmium, and has different chemical properties including being a solid and stable compound that is insoluble in water and has a high melting/boiling point with low vapor pressure. The environmental benefits and safety of First Solar's panel technology have been extensively researched and confirmed in more than 50 third-party reports from leading international institutions, including MIT, Columbia University, and Virginia Tech. These reports, concluded CdTe photovoltaic panels are safe in the event of breakage or fire, and through end-of-life recycling.

Glare: The vegetative buffers will restrict views of the solar arrays from outside the project boundaries. Furthermore, the solar arrays have trackers that move with the sun eliminating the potential for glare viewed from the ground.

Electromagnetic Fields (EMF): Photovoltaic systems produce extremely low-frequency non-ionizing EMF at levels lower than household appliances such as refrigerators and microwave ovens, and no EMF at night. The level of EMF is so low it will not extend even as far as the property boundary.

Sound



The main source of sound at a solar farm are the inverters which convert the direct current generated by the solar arrays to alternating current that can be fed into the electrical grid. Typically, at around 30 feet from the inverters, the sound level is about equivalent to the sound level of a normal conversation. At 200 feet away, the sound level of the inverters is inaudible. The Westlake Solar project arrays will be located approximately 100-feet away and inverters will be located 150ft away from the parcel boundaries. With this setback, it is not anticipated that the solar power plant will produce noise that can be heard outside of the power plant when fully operational. The inverters do not work at night so there will be no potential for noise emissions at night.

Traffic



The project will prepare a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for Franklin County and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as part of the construction permitting process to ensure all requirements are met for changes in traffic and impacts to the roads. Once constructed, the plant will generate little to almost no traffic. However, throughout the temporary construction process there will be traffic as workers and equipment deliveries go to the project site. As part of the CTMP, roads surrounding the project site will be evaluated and documented to record their pre-construction conditions and will be returned to their pre-construction condition or better.

Benefits



The project will bring numerous fiscal and economic benefits to Franklin County. Thanks to a recently passed legislation in the Virginia state assembly, the project is projected to contribute \$2,600,000 over its lifetime to the county's budget through tax payments.

Construction will create about 74 jobs, and employees will support the local economy and gain experience and expertise in Virginia's booming solar industry. Once operational, the Westlake Solar Project will require minimal staffing to operate and maintain the facility. As a result, there is little to no strain on public infrastructure and resources such as schools, roads, water and sewer while at the same time providing increased tax revenues to the county.

Do you have a question about the project or want to show your support? Email us at sanket@energix-us.com or call: 703-373-7492