



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
Board of Public Utilities
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CLEAN ENERGY

IN THE MATTER OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF <u>L.</u>)	ORDER
2012, <u>C.</u> 24, THE SOLAR ACT OF 2012)	
)	DOCKET NO. EO12090832V
IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLAR TRANSITION)	
PURSUANT TO <u>P.L.</u> 2018, <u>C.</u> 17 – APPLICATION FOR)	
CERTIFICATION OF SOLAR FACILITY AS ELIGIBLE)	
FOR TRECS PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (T) OF)	DOCKET NO. QO19010068
THE SOLAR ACT OF 2012)	
)	
CEP RENEWABLES LLC)	
VINELAND NEWFIELD SOLAR FARM LLC)	DOCKET NO. QO21081091

Parties of Record:

Brian O. Lipman, Esq., Director, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel
Gary Cicero, Managing Member, CEP Renewables

BY THE BOARD:

This Order concerns an application by Vineland Newfield Solar Farm, LLC (“CEP Renewables” or “Applicant”) for certification pursuant to L. 2012, c. 24 (“Solar Act”), codified at N.J.S.A. 48:3-87(t) [“Subsection (t)”]. CEP Renewables seeks certification for eligibility to generate Transition Renewable Energy Certificates (“TRECs”) for the proposed solar electric generation facility to be located at the former Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corporation site in Newfield Borough in Gloucester County, New Jersey (“the site”). Applicant asserted that the proposed site is a “brownfield” as that term is defined in the Solar Act.

BACKGROUND

On July 23, 2012, the Solar Act was signed into law. The Solar Act amends certain aspects of the statute governing generation, interconnection, and financing of renewable energy. Among other actions, the Solar Act requires the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (“Board”) to conduct proceedings to establish new standards and to develop new programs to implement the statute’s

directives. By Order dated October 10, 2012, the Board directed Board Staff (“Staff”) to initiate proceedings and convene a public stakeholder process to fulfill the directives of the Solar Act.¹

The Solar Act – specifically, Subsection (t) – provides that:

No more than 180 days after [July 23, 2012], the board shall, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and, after notice and opportunity for public comment and public hearing, complete a proceeding to establish a program to provide SRECs to owners of solar electric power generation facility projects certified by the board, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, as being located on a brownfield, on an area of historic fill or on a properly closed sanitary landfill facility. . . . Projects certified under this subsection shall be considered “connected to the distribution system” [and] shall not require such designation by the board[.]

[N.J.S.A. 48:3-87(t).]

The Solar Act defines the terms “brownfield,” “area of historic fill,” and “properly closed sanitary landfill facility.” A “brownfield” is “any former or current commercial or industrial site that is currently vacant or underutilized and on which there has been, or there is suspected to have been, a discharge of a contaminant.” N.J.S.A. 48:3-51. “Historic fill” is “generally large volumes of non-indigenous material, no matter what date they were placed on the site, used to raise the topographic elevation of a site” Id. A “properly closed sanitary landfill facility” means “a sanitary landfill facility, or a portion of a sanitary landfill facility, for which performance is complete with respect to all activities associated with the design, installation, purchase, or construction of all measures, structures, or equipment required by the Department of Environmental Protection” Id.

Toward implementing the October 10, 2012 Order, Staff met with staff of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP” or “Department”). On November 9, 2012, consistent with the requirements of the Solar Act, the Board held a public hearing presided over by then-Commissioner Joseph L. Fiordaliso. In addition, the public was invited to submit written comments through November 23, 2012.

¹ In re the Implementation of L. 2012, C. 24, The Solar Act of 2012; I/M/O the Implementation of L.2012, C.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(d)(3)(b) – A Proceeding to Investigate Approaches to Mitigate Solar Development Volatility; In re the Implementation of L.2012, C.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(e)(4) – Net Metering Aggregation Standards; In re the Implementation of L.2012, C.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(Q), (R) and (S) – Proceedings to Establish the Processes for Designating Certain Grid-Supply Projects as Connected to the Distribution System; In re the Implementation of L.2012, C.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(T) – A Proceeding to Establish a Program to Provide Solar Renewable Energy Certificates to Certified Brownfield, Historic Fill and Landfill Facilities; and In re the Implementation of L.2012, C.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(W) – A Proceeding to Consider the Need for a Program to Provide a Financial Incentive to Supplement Solar Renewable Energy Certificates for Net Metered Projects Greater than Three Megawatts; 2012 N.J. PUC LEXIS 286 (Oct. 10, 2012).

In an Order dated January 24, 2013, the Board approved Staff's proposed process for certifying solar generation projects as being located on brownfields, areas of historic fill, and properly closed sanitary landfill facilities.² The certification process for projects seeking approval pursuant to Subsection (t) provides three (3) potential recommendations from Staff to the Board: full certification, conditional certification, or denial of certification. Conditional certification may be granted for projects located on sites which NJDEP has determined require further remedial action or, in the case of properly closed sanitary landfill facilities, additional protective measures, and full certification may be granted for projects located on sites for which NJDEP has determined no further remedial or protective action is necessary. The process incorporates the expertise of the NJDEP to confirm a potential project's land use classification for eligibility and to account for the state of remediation of the project site.³

The January 24, 2013 Order states that certification would be limited to those areas delineated by NJDEP. In compliance with this directive, applicants are required to delineate the precise section(s) of the location where the solar facility is proposed to be sited, and NJDEP reviews this material in making its recommendation.

The Board found that an application for solar projects located on brownfields, areas of historic fill, or properly closed sanitary landfill facilities was necessary to initiate the certification process and directed Staff to work with NJDEP to develop an application. Id. at 33.

On May 23, 2018, Governor Murphy signed L. 2018, c. 17, codified at N.J.S.A. 48:3-51 to -87 into law ("Clean Energy Act" or "CEA" or "Act"), effective immediately. The CEA effected many changes to the legal and regulatory framework for solar development, including directing the closure of the Solar Renewable Energy Certificate ("SREC") program by no later than June 2021, reducing the SREC term or "qualification life" to 10 years, and imposing a cap on the cost to ratepayers of certain Class I renewable energy requirements.

The CEA mandated that the Board close the SREC Registration Program ("SRP") once it determined that 5.1% of the kilowatt-hours sold in the state had been generated by solar electric power generators connected to the distribution system ("5.1% Milestone") or, in the alternative, by no later than June 2021. On December 18, 2018, the Board approved the adoption of rule amendments to close the SREC market to new applications upon attainment of the 5.1% Milestone. The new rules took effect upon publication in the New Jersey Register on January 22, 2019.⁴ Pursuant to these rules, the Board determined that the 5.1% Milestone would be reached prior to May 2020 and closed the SRP on April 30, 2020.

On December 6, 2019, the Board established a Transition Incentive ("TI") Program to provide a bridge between the legacy SREC program and a successor incentive program in an orderly and efficient manner.⁵ The TI Program provides eligible projects with TRECs for each megawatt hour

² In re the Implementation of L. 2012, c. 24, The Solar Act of 2012; I/M/O the Implementation of L.2012, c.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(T) – A Proceeding to Establish a Program to Provide SRECS to Certified Brownfield, Historic Fill and Landfill Facilities; and In re the Implementation of L.2012, c.24, N.J.S.A 48:3-87(U) – A Proceeding to Establish a Registration Program for Solar Power Generation Facilities, 2013 N.J. PUC LEXIS 27, Order dated January 24, 2013 ("January 24, 2013 Order").

³ January 24, 2013 Order at 31-33.

⁴ 51 N.J.R. 138(e) (Jan. 22, 2019).

⁵ In re a New Jersey Solar Transition Pursuant to P.L. 2018 c. 17, BPU Docket No. QO19010068, Order

of electricity produced. Incentives are tailored to specific project types by the use of factors, which are applied to a base incentive rate to provide a particular project type with the full incentive amount or a set percentage of that amount depending on the costs and anticipated revenue streams for the project type. Projects certified pursuant to Subsection (t) receive a factor of 1.0 and thus the full amount of the base incentive.

At a Special Agenda Meeting held on April 27, 2020, the Board approved a TI rule proposal⁶ that codified this treatment at N.J.A.C. 14:8-10, which was published on May 18, 2020.⁷ On September 10, 2020, the Board adopted the rule proposal, and the rules became effective on October 5, 2020 when published in the New Jersey Register.⁸ The rule provides that the transition incentive “shall be available to projects that submitted a complete SREC Registration Program registration or a complete Subsection (t) application after October 29, 2018” (emphasis added) but that have not received a Permission to Operate at the time that the 5.1% Milestone is achieved.⁹ The rule also incorporates the eligibility requirements enumerated at N.J.S.A. 48:3-87(t) and the Board’s Implementing Orders, and requires developers seeking eligibility for TRECs to use the same application process developed for SREC eligibility.¹⁰ Moreover, the TI rules require compliance with all rules and regulations of the SRP at N.J.A.C. 14:8-2.4.¹¹

On August 17, 2022, the Board provided the opportunity for extension of the TI deadline to Subsection (t) projects registered in the TI program or with applications pending review with the NJDEP.¹² The Board waived its rules and modified prior orders to allow up to a 12-month extension to all Subsection (t) solar projects with current registrations as well as those that receive conditional certification by the Board in the future.

Projects certified under Subsection (t) are subject to all of the Board’s SRP and TI rules; the statutory language exempts such projects from the need for further Board designation as “connected to the distribution system” but does not remove any of the Board’s oversight authority. For example, projects seeking TREC eligibility must comply with the TI rules at N.J.A.C. 14:8-10, and applicable Board orders concerning registration with the TI Program.¹³ The size and location of the subject project will then be reflected in the public reporting of solar development pipeline data.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Description

dated December 6, 2019 (“December 2019 Order”).

⁶ In re a Rulemaking Proceeding to Amend the Renewable Portfolio Standard Rules and Create New Rules Establishing a Transition Incentive Program Pursuant to P.L. 2018, c.17, BPU Docket No. QX20030253 (“TI Rule Proposal”).

⁷ 52 N.J.R. 1048(a) (May 18, 2020).

⁸ 52 N.J.R. 1850(a) (October 5, 2020).

⁹ N.J.A.C. 14:8-10.4(a).

¹⁰ N.J.A.C. 14:8-10.4(h).

¹¹ N.J.A.C. 14:8-10.4(i).

¹² In re a New Jersey Solar Transition Pursuant to P.L. 2018, c. 17, Order Granting an up to 12-Month Extension for Projects Seeking an Incentive Pursuant to Subsection (T) in the Solar Transition Incentive Program BPU Docket No. QO19010068, Order dated August 17, 2022 (“TI Extension Order”).

¹³ December 2019 Order at 33.

On October 27, 2021, Staff received the Vineland Newfield Solar Farm application from CEP Renewables, revised to address deficiencies identified with its original application submitted on August 26, 2021. Staff reviewed the revised application for administrative completeness and forwarded a copy to the NJDEP for its review on November 10, 2021.

At issue is the request by CEP Renewables that its proposed solar facility, to be located in Newfield Borough, New Jersey, be certified as eligible for TRECs pursuant to Subsection (t). CEP Renewables filed an application with supporting documentation to enable a NJDEP determination as to whether 37.2 acres of the proposed site is a brownfield. NJDEP reviewed the application and supplied an advisory memorandum to Staff on September 29, 2022, on the land use classification and on the remediation status of the proposed site. On the basis of NJDEP's determination, the information certified by CEP Renewables in its application, and the Subsection (t) process approved in the January 24, 2013 Order, Staff recommends that the Board grant conditional certification, as explained further below.

CEP Renewables/ Vineland Newfield Solar Farm LLC - Docket No. QO21081091

Developer	Docket Number	Project/Designation Address	Location Town	County	Landfill, Brownfield, or Historic Fill	Proposed Array Size (MWdc)	EDC
Vineland Newfield Solar Farm, LLC (CEP)	QO21081091	Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corporation	Block 1002, Lots 1,4 35 South West Boulevard Borough of Newfield 08344	Gloucester	Brownfield	23.9	ACE

The NJDEP provided the following description of the site background and findings from a review of the application. The Applicant is proposing a 23.9 MWdc grid supply solar farm over the former Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corporation in the Borough of Newfield, Gloucester County ("Property"). The Applicant proposes to construct the proposed solar electric power generation facility on the brownfield portion of the Property, approximately 37.2 acres, as illustrated in Attachment B of the Application.

The Property is the site of former specialty glass manufacturing that began at the facility in the early 1900s. The Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corporation purchased the facility in the early 1950s and operated a chromium alloy and specialty alloy manufacturing facility from approximately 1957 to approximately 2006. During metals manufacturing operations, wastewater was handled in onsite lagoons. Numerous buildings exist on the Property however, only a few of them are currently being used for office space or warehousing. Many existing buildings will be demolished as a result of remediation activity or poor structural integrity. The Property is zoned on Gloucester County tax records as vacant and industrial land.

Environmental remediation activities have been ongoing at the Property for over 30 years. The land is the subject of the Federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (a.k.a. Superfund) Program, via the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the Department's Site Remediation & Waste Management and Radiation Protection

Programs. These programs require the remediation of Hazardous Substances and Radiological Material, including source material and Technically Enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (“TENORM”). Contamination at the site includes volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, perchlorate, and radioactive materials. Contamination is spread over the entire Property and extends off the land in groundwater, surface water, and sediment. Remediation to date has involved groundwater, soils, sediment, and radioactive materials. The site still requires further remediation for radionuclides and perchlorate and will have both engineering and institutional controls that will require future maintenance and monitoring. The NJDEP provided the statutory definition of “brownfield”.

N.J.S.A. 48:3-51 defines “brownfield” as: “[A]ny former or current commercial or industrial site that is currently vacant or underutilized and on which there has been, or there is suspected to have been, a discharge of a contaminant.” All three (3) prongs of the “brownfield” definition must be met for an applicant to qualify for SRECs on a brownfield. The burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that all three (3) prongs have been met. See below:

- a. Former or current commercial or industrial site: the Property is the site of a former chromium alloy and specialty alloy manufacturing facility and these operations were industrial in nature; therefore it is considered a current or former commercial or industrial establishment.
- b. Vacant or underutilized: operations ceased in 2006 and no operations occurred on the Property since; additionally the Property is zoned as vacant in Gloucester County tax documents; therefore, the site would be considered underutilized or vacant.
- c. Discharge of a contaminant at the location of the proposed solar array: contamination at the Property includes volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, perchlorate, and radioactive materials, spread over the entire site and extended to groundwater, surface water, and sediment. Remediation to date has involved groundwater, soils, sediment, and radioactive materials. Areas of concern require additional remedial action.

In consideration of the site background and as rendered in the Concept Solar Plan map provided as Attachment B in the application package, the NJDEP determined that the 37.2 acres proposed for solar development does constitute a Brownfield as defined by the Solar Act of 2012.

The NJDEP advised Staff of additional considerations since the solar project is proposed to be located on property that requires remediation. The property owner and the owner/operator of the solar installation must, in addition to any other actions required by law including, but not limited to, the Spill Compensation and Control Act, N.J.S.A. 58:10-23.11 et seq., the Brownfield and Contaminated Site Remediation Act, N.J.S.A. 58:10B-1 et seq., and any regulations promulgated pursuant thereto, ensure that the solar installation: (a) does not exacerbate the contamination at the property; (b) does not interfere with any necessary remediation of the property; and (c) does not disrupt or change, without prior written permission from the NJDEP, any existing or future engineering or institutional control that is part of a remedial action for the Property. The facility may not change ownership/control until radioactive materials license 517488 has requested and received Department approval for license termination as regulated under N.J.A.C. 7:28 Subchapters 4 and 58. Additional land use review and permits may be required by the NJDEP. The applicant must contact the NJDEP’s Office of Permitting and Project Navigation to determine which permits may be required.

Based on the information contained in the application and the NJDEP's findings, Staff recommends that the Board conditionally certify the Applicant's 23.9 MWdc project as being located on 37.2 acres of a "brownfield," as that term is defined pursuant to Subsection (t). Staff also recommends that the Board authorize Staff to require that the conditions for certification provided by the NJDEP be fully documented as satisfied by the Applicant prior to Staff's issuance of full certification of the project's eligibility for TRECs. In addition, Staff recommends that the Board direct the Applicant to file its TREC registration within 14 days of the date of the Order and explicitly grant conditional certification.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Board **FINDS** that, as required by Subsection (t), Staff transmitted the application discussed above to NJDEP for a determination of eligible land use type and status of remediation on the proposed site. NJDEP determined that the solar array proposed for Block 1002, Lots 1 and 4 as documented in the Gloucester County tax records, is located on land meeting the Solar Act's definition of a "brownfield." To be eligible for the creation of TRECs, the facility must not exceed 23.9 MWdc and must be placed within the 37.2 acres of the brownfield depicted in the application. Based on information provided by NJDEP, the Board **FINDS** that the Vineland Newfield Solar Farm project is located on land meeting the Solar Act's definition of a "brownfield."

The Board also **FINDS** that NJDEP determined that the property owner will need to comply with State laws relevant to the property for the solar installation, as well as any other permits identified by the NJDEP, prior to construction of the solar electric power generation facility. The Board **FINDS** that the NJDEP has stated that the construction of the solar installation on the brownfield needs to address the remediation requirements of the property.

The Board **FINDS** that NJDEP's requirements must be addressed and thus **GRANTS** conditional certification of Applicant's proposed solar electric generation facility, to be located on 37.2 acres at the former Shieldalloy Metallurgical Corporation site at Block 1002, Lots 1 and 4, in Newfield Borough, Gloucester County, New Jersey, with an array size not to exceed 23.9 MWdc. To obtain full certification, the Board **DIRECTS** the Applicant to demonstrate to Staff that all NJDEP requirements have been satisfied.

In addition, to obtain full certification, the Board **DIRECTS** CEP Renewables to submit an initial TI Program registration package within 14 days of the effective date of this order, and to complete construction within two years in accordance with N.J.A.C. 14:8-10.4(e)(4)(ii)(3). The Board **DIRECTS** Staff to issue full certification to the project upon the Applicant's demonstration that all requirements for full certification – including all NJDEP requirements and all TREC eligibility requirements at N.J.A.C. 14:8-10, et seq. – have been satisfied. After the Applicant receives full certification, the Board **DIRECTS** Staff to issue a New Jersey Certification Number to the project for purposes of TREC creation for a 15-year Qualification Life.

This Order is issued in reliance on the information certified in the application and does not grant any rights in connection with construction of the proposed project beyond certification under Subsection (t), provided that the facilities are constructed in accordance with NJDEP requirements, the site plans filed with the application, and the TREC registration.

This Order shall be effective on December 14, 2022.

DATED: December 7, 2022

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
BY:



JOSEPH L. FIORDALISO
PRESIDENT



MARY-ANNA HOLDEN
COMMISSIONER



DIANNE SOLOMON
COMMISSIONER



ROBERT M. GORDON
COMMISSIONER



DR. ZENON CHRISTODOULOU
COMMISSIONER

ATTEST: 

CARMEN D. DIAZ
ACTING SECRETARY

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the within
document is a true copy of the original
in the files of the Board of Public Utilities.

IN THE MATTER OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF L. 2012, C.24, THE SOLAR ACT OF 2012;

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLAR TRANSITION PURSUANT TO L. 2018, C. 17 – APPLICATION FOR
CERTIFICATION OF SOLAR FACILITY AS ELIGIBLE FOR TRECS PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (T)
OF THE SOLAR ACT OF 2012

CEP RENEWABLES
VINELAND NEWFIELD SOLAR FARM LLC

DOCKET NOS. EO12090832V, QO19010068, AND QO21081091

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