

# SWEETGRASS SOLAR WITH STORAGE PROJECT

## JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER #2

Newsletter #1 introducing the Sweetgrass Solar with Storage Project (the Project) was mailed out to stakeholders on August 2, 2023. This introductory newsletter included details of the Project location and infrastructure, Project studies and information on battery energy storage systems (BESS), as well as a preliminary schedule for the Project.

Since sending out this information, the Government of Alberta put a moratorium on renewable energy projects and Neoen took the opportunity to review the Project design, engage with the community and plan next steps. At the time, Neoen was anticipating hosting a community open house in September 2023, however this was delayed. As a result, we are writing to you today to provide an update on the Project.

### PROJECT UPDATES

Three quarter sections have been added to the south west area of the Project, as shown on the enclosed updated site plan. Neoen is actively consulting with any impacted stakeholders on this change.

### UPDATED GLARE IMPACT MAP

As a result of the revisions to the layout, Neoen has updated the glare impact map, and a revised copy is included in this package.

At certain periods of the day, solar modules can reflect sunlight at eye level, which can be distracting for drivers on roadways.

A glare study was conducted which investigated the areas where there will be glare. In order to reduce the impact of glare, the project will change the angle of solar modules at certain periods of the day. The glare assessment determined that with mitigation via backtracking angle limits, no assessed receptors are expected to receive glare. By limiting the minimum resting angle that the modules can travel through during the backtracking period, the potential for glare at these shallow angles can be eliminated.

### PRIVACY STATEMENT

Collected personal information will be protected under the provincial *Personal Information Protection Act*. As part of the regulatory process for new generation projects and transmission lines, the Proponent may be required to provide your personal information to the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC).

### IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Project Updates
- Updated Glare Impact Map
- Municipal Consultation
- Public Stakeholder Engagement
- Updated Project Schedule
- Community Open House
- Contact Us
- Who is the AUC?
- Frequently Asked Questions

### INSERTS:

- Updated Project Layout
- Updated Glare Map
- AUC Brochure



## MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF WILLOW CREEK

Neoen has been in discussions with the MD of Willow Creek since August 2023 in order to understand and mitigate questions and concerns the MD of Willow Creek may have. To date, the main themes Neoen has heard concerns over include: siting of the Project, weed and vegetation management, co-location of agricultural activities with the project/use of farm land, decommissioning and reclamation, and local employment/economic opportunities. We have included a Q&A page in this package, in order to provide information on the commonly received questions.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Neoen has been meeting with landowners one-on-one since August 2023 to understand questions and concerns and determine what mitigation options could be put in place to reduce impacts to stakeholders. Many of the same questions and concerns the MD raised have been raised by the public, and we have included information on these topics below. In addition, public stakeholders have raised concerns over visual impacts.



## UPDATED PROJECT SCHEDULE

Please note that the schedule is preliminary and subject to change.

Initial Notification to stakeholders – August 2023

Public Consultation – Ongoing

AEPA Submission – December 2023

Newsletter #2 - January 2024

Community Open House – February 2024

Anticipated AEPA Referral Report - Q1 2024

Anticipated AUC Submission – Q2 2024

Anticipated AUC Approval – October 2024

Municipal Permitting - April 2024 to September 2024

Construction Commencement (if approved) – Q2 2026

Construction Completion - Q3 2027



## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

Neoen is hosting a community open house on February 21, 2024 at the Granum Rec Centre in Granum, from 5pm to 8pm. Please note that this community open house is an informal event, with subject matter experts on hand to answer stakeholder questions. In our experience, stakeholder concerns are unique and a presentation style open house does not allow us to address individual stakeholder concerns. If you are uncomfortable with attending the open house and would prefer to arrange a personal consultation, please contact us directly to arrange a meeting.

## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

FEBRUARY 21, 2024

REC CENTRE, GRANUM

5PM TO 8PM



## CONTACT US

If you have any questions about the Project, or to arrange a personal consultation, please contact:



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## WHO IS THE AUC?

The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) is a quasi-judicial independent agency established by the Government of Alberta, responsible to ensure that the delivery of Alberta's utility service takes place in a manner that is fair, responsible and in the public interest.

They regulate investor-owned natural gas, electric and water utilities, and certain municipally owned electric utilities to ensure that customers receive safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates. The AUC ensures that electric facilities are built, operated and decommissioned in an efficient and environmentally responsible way. The AUC also provides regulatory oversight of issues related to the development and operation of the wholesale electricity market in Alberta as well as the retail gas and electricity markets in the province. For more information visit [www.auc.ab.ca](http://www.auc.ab.ca) or refer to the enclosed brochure.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Project Siting**

We have received several inquiries about how the Project was sited and why this location was chosen. There are several factors that go into siting a solar project including: an area with high solar resource, proximity to a substation and existing transmission line infrastructure with capacity to host the project, relatively flat land for buildability and landowners willing to host the Project.

### **Weed and Vegetation Management:**

Neoen understands the importance of controlling weeds and vegetation on the Project lands as keeping weeds and vegetation well managed helps ensure smooth operation of a solar project, minimizing costs, and avoiding growth that impacts equipment and could even shade solar panels. As part of the AUC application, Neoen will develop a weed management plan within the environmental protection plan. Neoen is required to follow the Weed Control Act and ensure that noxious weeds are controlled. We also understand that there are nuisance weeds locally that are of concern to stakeholders, and we intend to apply best management practices to control nuisance weeds as well. We will fight weeds in the same way as farmers.

### **Use of Farm Land/Co-location of Agricultural Activities**

Under the current legislative framework, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA) has policies in place which favour siting on agricultural land, as it has a lower risk to wildlife habitat. Currently in Alberta, renewable energy projects cannot be sited on Crown land or native prairie. We know that agriculture and solar energy are both ideally located on flat lands in an area with a high solar resource, leading to there being natural conflict between farm land and project siting.

A few things Neoen is doing to reduce land use for the same power output:

- Installing the highest efficiency panels on the market
- Bifacial panels that produce electricity from the backside due to reflection off the ground (great with Alberta snow)
- Tracking technology that follows the sun throughout the day

### **Decommissioning and Reclamation**

There is a heightened awareness on proper decommissioning and reclamation of energy assets throughout Alberta. Through the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA) and Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations, AEPA, 2018 (C&R Directive), there are other legally enforceable obligations provincially.

The C&R Directive will be used to guide revegetation and reclamation of the site, in order to ensure that vegetation is re-established, soils are maintained, and equivalent land capability is maintained during operations.

As part of the C&R Directive, developers must complete a pre-disturbance site assessment (PDSA) prior to construction. At the end of project life, developers must return the project to the pre-disturbance state. The PDSA is used as a baseline by the province. A reclamation certificate from the province is required to discharge this obligation.

Neoen has strong commitments within their private lease agreements for decommissioning and reclamation and is required to describe how the operator will have sufficient funds at the end of life to pay for decommissioning as part of our AUC application. Neoen is committed to adhering to any new requirements the AUC may introduce with respect to decommissioning and reclamation.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - CONTINUED

### **Local Employment/Economic Opportunities**

The Project will require up to 1,000 workers during construction including roles such as Surveyors, Heavy equipment operators, Electrical contractors, Mechanical contractors, Equipment Transportation and Hauling and more. Our preference is to hire local labour wherever possible. During operations, only a few full-time workers will be needed, and ideally these employees are also local for ongoing operations. Neoen trains young workers looking to get into the construction aspect of renewable energy projects. A job fair will be held prior to construction of the Project to assist in procuring local labour.

Neoen is actively seeking input from the community for a community benefit fund for the Project. We want to know what is important to local stakeholders. Should you have any suggestions as to how Neoen can best support your community, please contact us to discuss.



### **Property Value Impacts**

The consensus is that the project wouldn't affect vacant agricultural properties, but could have a negligible impact on residential properties due to changes on viewscapes. Neoen is working directly with residents near the Project to mitigate negative visual impacts.

### **Visual Impacts**

The inclusion of visual factors in the environmental assessment is expected to promote more effective decisions regarding the acceptability of a proposed project and to create more suitable and operative environmental management practices.

