

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

**Environmental Assessments
Prepared between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021
by the**

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

As provided for by Wis. Stat. § 1.11(2)(j)

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Background

Wisconsin Stat. § 1.11(2)(j) requires agencies to submit annual reports to the Legislature regarding environmental assessments (EA) and environmental impact statements (EIS). The statute requires that all agencies of the state shall:

Annually, no later than September 15, submit a report to the chief clerk of each house of the legislature for distribution under s. 13.172(2), including the number of proposed actions for which the agency conducted an assessment of whether an impact statement was required under par. (c) and the number of impact statements prepared under par. (c).

This report covers activities by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

Environmental Assessments

Commission staff prepared an EA for thirteen proposed actions to determine whether an EIS was necessary under the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA), Wis. Stat. § 1.11. These environmental documents were prepared cooperatively with staff of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Office of Energy, as required under Wis. Stat. § 196.025(2m)(b). For these actions, it was determined that preparation of an EIS was not warranted.

The city of Manitowoc applied for a project to construct a water main extension project outside the City's corporate city limits. The purpose of the project was to provide safe, clean water to multiple properties that previously obtained their drinking water from private potable wells impacted with chronic containment compounds above their respective maximum containment standards.

Seven merchant plant developers applied for and were granted approvals to construct new solar electric generating facilities. The names, size, and location of the developments are shown below:

- Paris Solar – 200MW – Kenosha County
- Wood County Solar – 150MW – Wood County
- Grant County Solar – 200MW – Grant County
- Onion River Solar – 150MW – Sheboygan County
- Darien Solar – 250MW – Rock and Walworth Counties
- Springfield Solar – 100MW – Dodge County
- Apple River Solar – 100MW – Polk County

Wisconsin Power & Light Company (WPL) filed and received approval for the acquisition, construction, installation, and operation of six solar electric generation facilities. Three of the generation facilities were under 100MW: a development in Rock County of 50MW, a development in Richland County of 50MW, and a development of 75MW in Jefferson County. The three other projects WPL was approved to acquire and construct are the Wood County Solar, Grant County Solar, and Onion River Solar projects listed in the section above.

American Transmission Company applied for and was granted approval for three construction projects that required an EA to be prepared. Two involved the expansion of existing substations. One of the expansions was to the Highland substation in Iowa County, where a 69kV connection to the existing system was also required. Some system upgrades to existing transmission lines in Sauk County were also part of that approval. The second substation expansion project was for the Paris substation in Kenosha County. That project involved new 345kV facilities to connect its 138kV and 345kV systems. The third project involved rebuilding ATC's existing Arcadian substation in the city of New Berlin, Waukesha County.

Wisconsin Electric Power Company and Wisconsin Gas jointly filed for approval to construct a system of new Liquefied Natural Gas facilities and associated natural gas pipelines near Ixonia and Bluff Creek, Wisconsin. The facilities are intended to be used as peaking facilities to supply natural gas to the system in peak usage seasons.

Ongoing Activities

Commission staff is currently reviewing several utility-scale solar developments proposed to be located in various portions of central to southern Wisconsin. The first of these kind were processed and approved over the course of the last two years and continue to be prevalent in the Commission's application queue. Commission staff is continually learning about the impacts and potential impacts associated with these facilities, and the high level of public interest. There are currently three of these projects in process, proposed by merchant developers, as Certificates of Public Convenience (CPCN) applications. Commission staff has prepared EAs for two and is in the process of EA preparation for the third.

One additional large solar docket is a request for a Certificate of Authority (CA) from WPL to acquire and construct one of the merchant plant projects mentioned previously, Springfield Solar, along with an additional five sub-100 MW solar developments in other parts of southern and central Wisconsin, listed above. This type of application is very similar to an application filed by WPL last year and approved earlier this year by the Commission. Commission staff is currently preparing an EA for the five sub-100 MW projects that are part of the docket.

Commission staff is currently preparing two EAs for proposed Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine generating units. These are natural gas electric generation facilities. One is proposed to be constructed by We Energies at a site near Wausau, Wisconsin, and the other is proposed by Great Lakes Utilities, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The generally stated need for these facilities is to provide additional generating capacity, base load, and peaking generation as utilities transition away from fossil fuel base load generation.

Commission staff is currently preparing two EAs for two ATC projects before the Commission. One is for a new 138kV transmission line proposed to be collocated on the Cardinal Hickory Creek transmission line from the Hooterville substation to a new Mount Horeb substation to connect and support distribution systems in the area. The other is for a proposed new 138kV transmission line from the Howards Grove substation to the Erdman substation in Sheboygan County. The stated need for the project is that the Sheboygan area contains a large point load that is on 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that there are only two 345 circuits and one 138 circuit feeding the area. This could create the potential for a single point failure and this project would alleviate that risk.

Xcel Energy has filed an application with the Commission to relocate and rebuild two existing transmission lines in Ashland and Iron Counties. Each line is approximately 35 miles long and is located within the reservation of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Native Americans. Xcel cites three primary reasons for the project: reliability concerns due to the remote nature of the facilities that limits access, the advanced age and poor condition of the existing facilities, and limited land rights across the reservation of the Bad River Band.

A supplemental EA is being prepared for the Paris Solar project in Kenosha County. The project was approved earlier this year with a conditional 50MW battery energy storage system. Since approval, the applicants have increased the proposed size of the battery system to 110MW. A supplemental EA is being prepared for this purpose.

During the report year, no impact statements were required or prepared under Wis. Stat. § 13.172(2)(c).

Environmental Assessments Completed July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

137-CE-191	American Transmission Company project to expand its existing Highland Substation and to construct a new 69kV transmission line to connect the substation to the existing system in the town of Eden, Iowa County, and uprate its existing transmission line between the Highland Substation and its Spring Green Substation in the town of Sauk, Sauk County WI.	3/2021
137-CE-192	American Transmission Company project to rebuild its existing Arcadian Substation in the city of New Berlin, Waukesha County WI.	3/2021
137-CE-193	American Transmission Company project to expand its existing Paris Substation with new 345kV facilities to connect its 138kV and 345kV systems in the town of Paris, Kenosha County WI.	5/2021
5-CG-106	Wisconsin Electric Power Company and Wisconsin Gas LLC Project to construct a system of new liquefied natural gas facilities and associated natural gas pipelines near Ixonia and Bluff Creek WI.	12/2020

3320-CW-115	City of Manitowoc project to construct a water main extension project outside the city of Manitowoc's corporate city limits, Manitowoc County WI	3/2021
9801-CE-100	Paris Solar Farm LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the town of Paris, Kenosha County WI	7/2020
9803-CE-100	Wood County Solar Project LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the town of Saratoga, Wood County WI	8/2020
9803-CE-101	Wood County Solar Project LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility transmission tie-line in the town of Saratoga, Wood County WI	8/2020
9804-CE-100	Grant County Solar Project LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility located near Potosi and Harrison townships, Grant County WI	11/2020
9805-CE-100	Onion River Solar LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the town of Holland, Sheboygan County WI	12/2020

9806-CE-100	Darien Solar Energy Center LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the town of Bradford, Rock County, and the town of Darien, Walworth County	2/2021
9807-CE-100	Springfield Solar Farm LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the town of Lomira and the village of Lomira, Dodge County, WI	4/2021
9808-CE-100	Apple River Solar LLC, to construct a solar electric generation facility in the towns of Clayton, Beaver, Apple River, and Lincoln, Polk County, WI	4/2021
6680-CE-182	Wisconsin Power and Light Company project for acquisition, construction, Installation, and Operation of six solar electric generation facilities in WI	1/2021