

# Public Information and Environmental Assessment Scoping Meeting

## **Sherco Solar Project**

August 31, 2021

# Meeting Agenda

- **Introduction and Permit Application Review Process – *Public Utilities Commission***
- **Description of Proposed Project – *Xcel Energy***
- **Environmental Review Requirements – *Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis***
- **Questions and Comments**

# Proposed Project

- The Sherco Solar Project is a proposed 460-megawatt solar energy generating system.
- The project would consist of an East Block and a West Block located on approximately 3,479 acres of land adjacent to the Xcel Energy Sherburne County Generating Plant, in Sherburne County, Minnesota.
- The East and West blocks of the solar facility would connect to the electrical grid at the existing Sherburne County Substation by two new 345-kilovolt transmission lines, 1.7 miles and 3.2 miles in length, respectively.

# Required Permits

The project is defined as a **large electric power generating plant** with an associated high-voltage transmission lines.

Before the project can be constructed the Public Utilities Commission must issue a:

- **site permit** because the solar facility is greater than 50 megawatts; and
- **route permit** because the high-voltage transmission line is greater than 100 kV and greater than 1,500 feet in length.

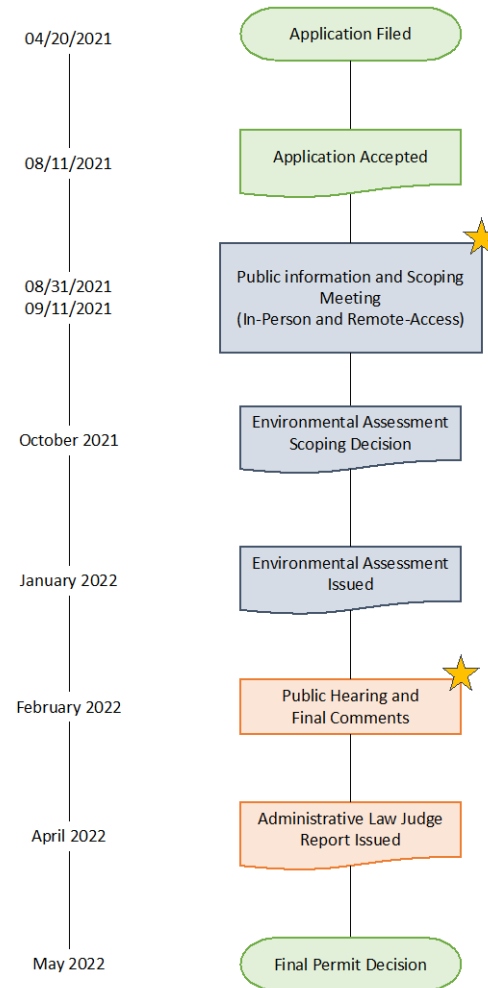
A **certificate of need** is typically required for this size project; however, in a separate docket, the Commission determined the project was exempt from this requirement.

# Summary of Permit Considerations

In making a decision to grant a site and route permit, the Commission generally considers the following (*See Minn. R. 7850.4100*):

- The potential human and environmental impacts of the project. For example: noise, aesthetics, public health and safety, land use conflicts, cultural and historic resources, air and water quality, and plants and wildlife.
- Whether there are suitable ways to minimize, mitigate, or avoid identified impacts.
- Whether the project is efficient, cost-effective, secure, and conserves resources.

## Application Review Process and Estimated Timeline







# Sherco Solar Project



# SHERCO SOLAR PARTNERSHIP

## Sherco Solar – Together

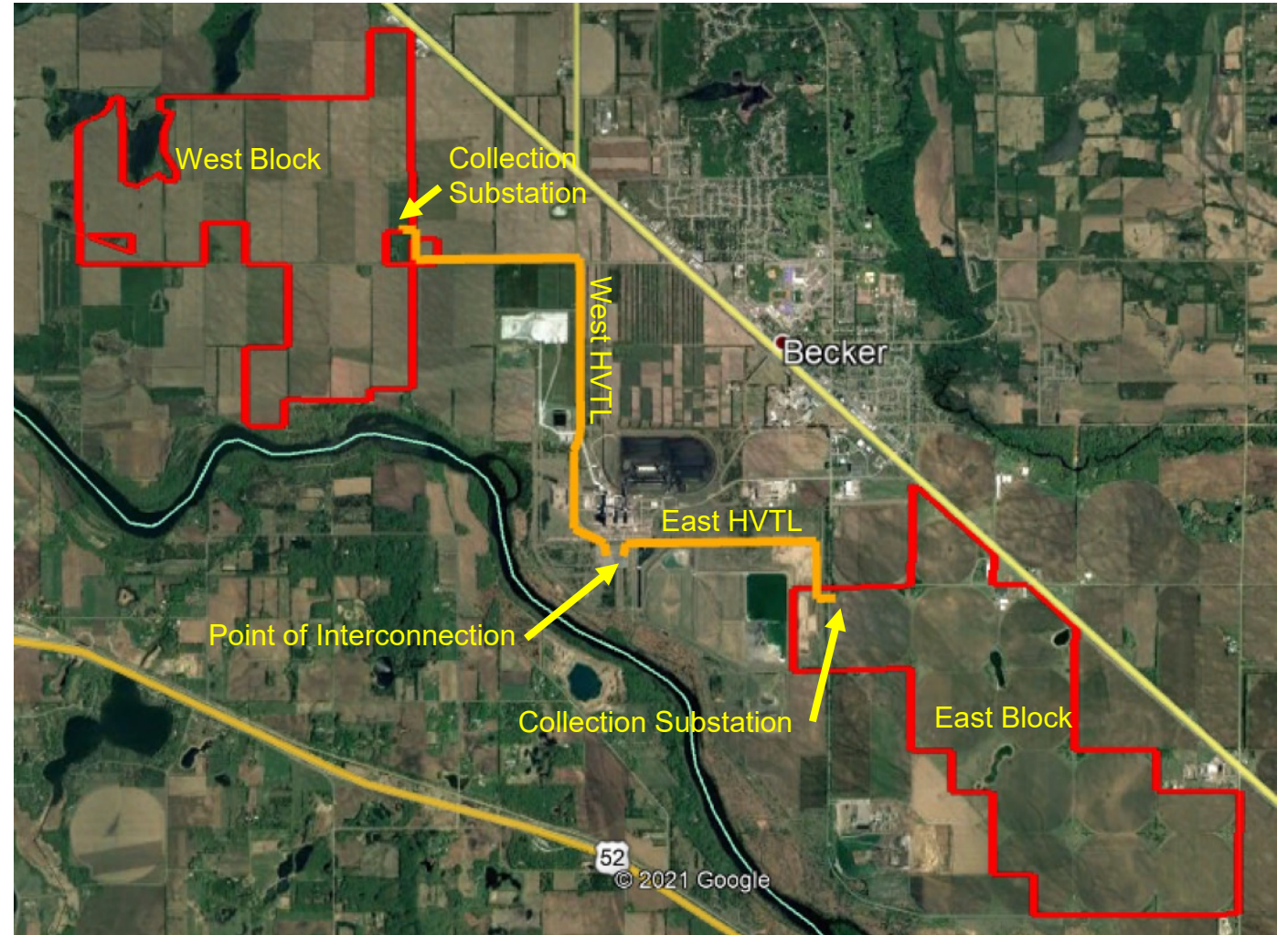
- Xcel Energy is leveraging National Grid Renewables expertise as a top renewable energy developer to set up the project for long-term success through development process.
- Xcel Energy will utilize expertise as an energy provider to construct, own and operate the project for the long term.





## PROJECT DETAILS

- Operational capacity: 460 MW
- Solar Project Area ~3,500 acres
- West Transmission Line (HVTL) ~3.1 miles
- East HVTL ~1.6 miles
- Location: Clear Lake Township, Becker Township, Becker (City)
- Expected COD: December 31, 2024



## PROJECT DETAILS



**100,000**

HOMES POWERED EACH  
YEAR, ON AVERAGE



**\$115** MILLION

IN WAGES FROM 900 UNION CONSTRUCTION  
JOBS, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON HIRING  
WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR

UP TO

**300,000**

TONS OF CO<sub>2</sub> AVOIDED EACH  
YEAR, ON AVERAGE



THAT'S EQUAL TO  
TAKING MORE THAN

**60,000**

GASOLINE CARS OFF THE  
ROAD EVERY YEAR



**\$240** MILLION

IN LOCAL BENEFITS LIKE TAXES AND  
LANDOWNER PAYMENTS OVER THE  
35-YEAR LIFE OF THE PROJECT

# ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND AGENCY COORDINATION

- Wetland delineations complete
- Cultural resource surveys complete
- Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Information System review
- Agricultural Impact Mitigation Plan developed in coordination with the MN Department of Agriculture
- Vegetation Management Plan in coordination with State agencies





# COMPONENTS



# COMPONENTS

Monocrystalline Bifacial



Thin Film



Polycrystalline





# COMPONENTS

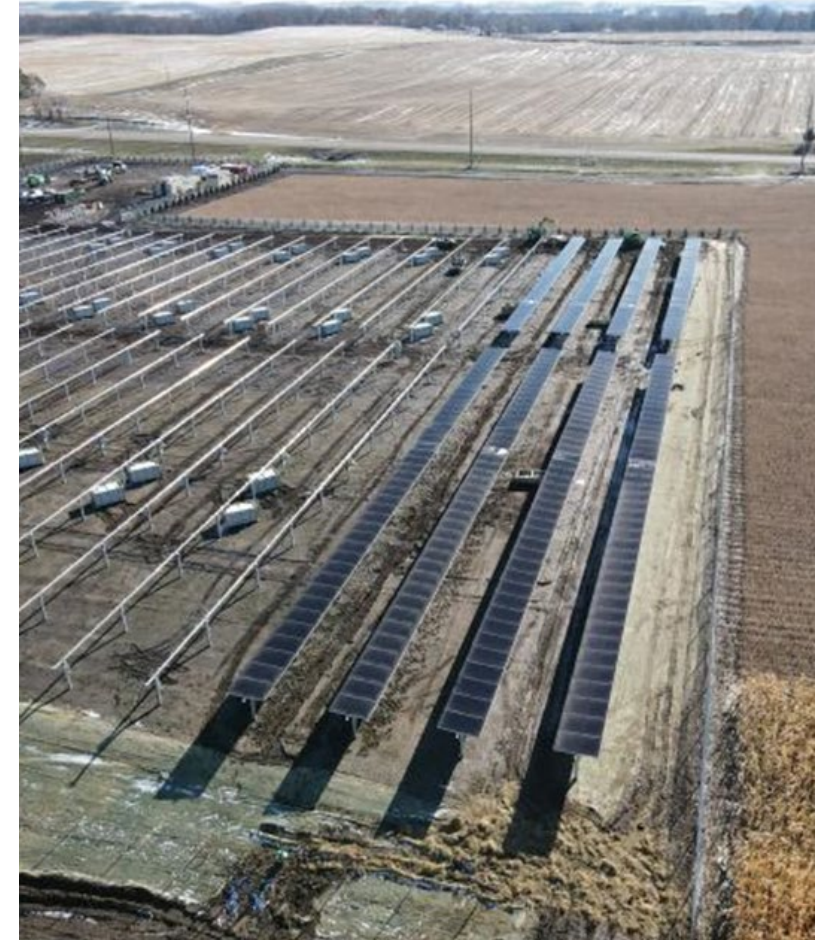




# CONSTRUCTION

Generally, consists of:

- Site preparation
- Pile installation
- Racking installation
- Module installation
- Interconnection
- Re-vegetation



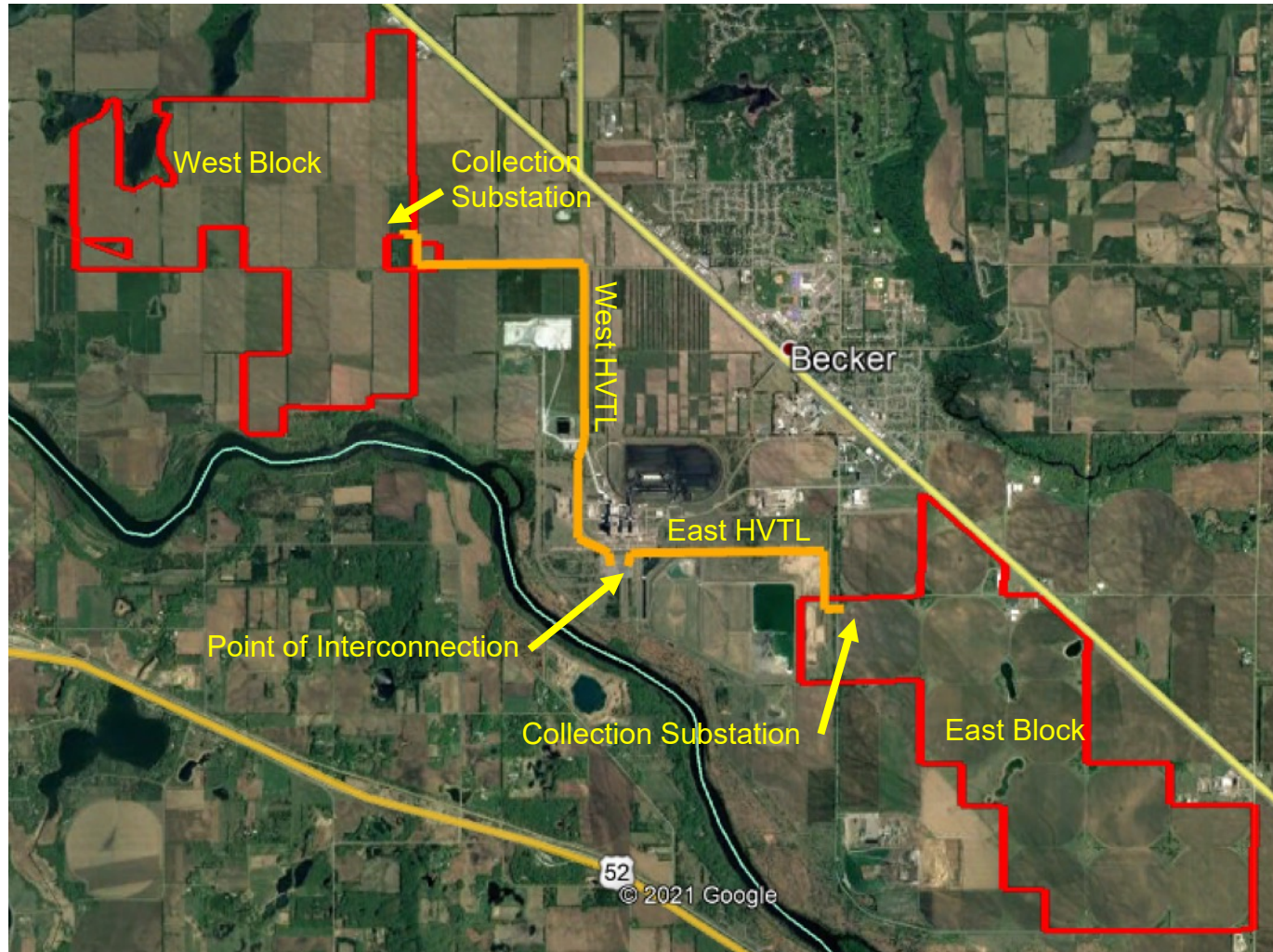


# CONSTRUCTION





# SITE OVERVIEW





# SOLAR PROJECT COMPONENTS – VISUAL RENDERING





## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Minimal onsite traffic, 4-6 regular onsite techs
- Routine inspections and electrical maintenance
- Semi-annual drone inspections of panels
- Repairs completed as needed
- Vegetation plan establishes native pollinator-friendly plant species
- Site inspections will assess growth and perform care if needed, including spot treatment for weeds
- Occasional mowing; 2-3 times during establishment, ~ 1x/year following



## DECOMMISSIONING

- At end of Project's life, Project may be "repowered" or decommissioned
- Upon Decommissioning, components are removed and reused or recycled at the end of the project's useful life
- The site can be restored to its previous agricultural use, or another use based on landowner wishes
- Soil quality generally has improved on sites previously used for agriculture as soils have rested/lain fallow during the project's life





# Questions?

Contact:

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Aaron Brixius- Senior Project Manager

763-261-3802

[aaron.p.brixius@xcelenergy.com](mailto:aaron.p.brixius@xcelenergy.com)





# Sherco Solar Project Environmental Assessment Scoping Meeting

**Bill Storm** | Environmental Review Manager

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85 Seventh Place East, Suite 280 | St. Paul, MN 55101-2198



# What is environmental review?

## Goal: Informed decision making through:

- Opportunities for public input concerning the proposed project (**Scoping**).
- Assembly of objective set of facts concerning the proposed project that everyone can use to base their comments and decisions (**Environmental Assessment**).
- Does not advocate for or against the project.



**Scoping focusses the Environmental Assessment on the most relevant information. It provides an opportunity for public input on the table of contents.**

- What potential human and environmental impacts should be studied?
- Are there ways to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts?
- Are there unique characteristics of the proposed site or the project that should be considered?
- Is there anything missing or mischaracterized in the applications?

## **The Department of Commerce will prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Sherco Solar project that:**

- Describes the proposed project and any alternatives.
- Assesses potential human and environmental impacts.
- Identifies strategies to avoid and/or mitigate impacts.
- The environmental assessment will address the environmental review requirements for both the LEPGP site permit and the HVTL route permits.

# How and when can I comment?

## How to Comment

- Verbal Comments at Today's Meeting
- Complete and Submit a Comment Sheet
- Comment On-Line: [mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities](https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities)
- Mail, Fax, or Email a Comment:
  - William Storm
  - Minnesota Department of Commerce
  - 85 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 280
  - St. Paul, MN 55101
  - Fax: 651-539-0109
  - [bill.storm@state.mn.us](mailto:bill.storm@state.mn.us)
- Comment Period Ends: **Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

# Commenting this evening - Etiquette

- One speaker at a time. The court reporter cannot record competing speakers and cannot take comments from the gallery.
- Maintain respect for others; reasonable people can disagree.
- Begin by stating and spelling your name.
- Direct your comments and questions to the scope of the EA.
- Please limit your initial comments to five minutes. After everyone has a chance to speak, we will come back to you.

## As a reminder, please focus your comments on:

- What potential human and environmental impacts should be studied?
- Are there ways to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts?
- Are there unique characteristics of the site or the project that should be considered?
- Is there anything missing or mischaracterized in the applications?

**Remember: Written comments are due September 15, 2021, by 4:30 pm.**



## Written Comment Period

Written comments will be accepted through **September 15, 2021 by 4:30 p.m.**

**Online:** <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>

**Email:** [bill.storm@state.mn.us](mailto:bill.storm@state.mn.us)

**Fax:** 651-539-0109

**U.S. Mail:** Bill Storm, Environmental Review Manager  
Minnesota Department of Commerce  
85 7th Place East, Suite 280  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Please focus your comments on the following:

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the environmental assessment?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project site that should be considered?

## Additional Information

### Department of Commerce Website:

<https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/eera/web/project/14335>

**Full Case Record:** See all documents filed in this docket by visiting: [mn.gov/puc](https://mn.gov/puc), select *eDockets*, enter year (21) and the docket numbers (191, 190, or 189).

**Subscribe to the Docket:** Receive email notification when new documents are filed in this matter at <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>, select *Subscribe to Dockets*, and follow the prompts.

## State Agency Contacts

### Environmental Review Manager, Department of Commerce

Bill Storm, [bill.storm@state.mn.us](mailto:bill.storm@state.mn.us) or 651-539-1844

### Energy Facilities Planner, Public Utilities Commission

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### Public Advisor, Public Utilities Commission

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