

The *EQB Monitor*

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Submission Deadline: [View 2021 Schedule](#)
Use the [EQB Monitor Submission Form](#)

The *EQB Monitor* is a weekly publication announcing environmental review documents, public comment periods and other actions of the Environmental Quality Board. For more information on environmental review, please visit the [EQB website](#). You can find active projects in your community on the [Environmental Review Projects Interactive Map](#).



Check the [EQB Monitor Schedule](#) and [EQB calendar](#) for more details on *Monitor* deadlines and Board Meetings. Meeting minutes, agendas and additional notices are also posted on the [EQB Website](#).

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EQB Announcements

Climate Change & Environmental Review: We are listening!

The EQB is hosting the second Listening Session virtually on **Saturday March 27 from 10:00am to 11:30am**. The Listening Session provides opportunities to engage with staff and other participants on proposed changes to Minnesota's Environmental Review Program to integrate climate information. For more details about this meeting, the proposed changes, as well as other opportunities to provide feedback, please visit the [Climate Change and Environmental Review webpage](#).



Photo by MPCA

More opportunities are now available to provide your feedback on proposed changes to the Environmental Review Program that address climate change

For information about the proposed [changes](#) and to find information about all the opportunities to provide your feedback, please visit [Climate Change and Environmental Review](#).

Public comment period ending soon: Submit written feedback. This input will be accepted through March 31, 2021.

- Email to: Env.Review@state.mn.us
- Mail to: EQB, 520 Lafayette Road N, St. Paul, MN 55155

New: Survey available to submit your feedback

Please complete the EQB's survey by **April 9, 2021**. The survey is available using this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ERIS>. The survey should take fewer than 10 minutes. Information you provide will be used to help shape the changes to the Environmental Review Program.



Apply now to be an Environmental Quality Board member

The application is open for a Public Board Member position representing Minnesota's Congressional District 6. This district spans parts of Benton, Carver, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright, Anoka and Washington counties, including cities such as Saint Cloud, Big Lake, Hugo, and Waconia.

Serving on the Environmental Quality Board is a unique opportunity to shape environmental issues in Minnesota. Public Board Members bring the voices of Minnesotans from around the state into decision making, helping the Board think in new ways about environmental challenges and solutions.

To learn more, visit the Environmental Quality Board's [Join the Board](#) page. The position is open until filled, and begins in January 2022.

Citizen Petition

The following petition has been filed with the EQB requesting preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). The EQB has assigned the indicated unit of government to review the petition and decide on the need for an EAW.

Petition Name: Kenneth Schwartz Gravel Mine
Responsible Government Unit (RGU): Wright County

On March 22, 2021, EQB received notice from Wright County (the designated RGU) that no permit applications had been submitted for this project. Per the requirements in [MR 4410.1100 Subp. 9](#), the petition will remain in effect for one year from the date on which it was filed with the EQB (March 18, 2021). During that time, a prohibition on final governmental decisions ([MR 4410.3100](#)) remains in effect for any proposed project for which the nature and location is substantially similar to the project identified in the petition.

Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dundee Nursery Redevelopment

Comment Deadline: April 22, 2021

Project Description: Parkera is proposing to redevelop a 23.7-acre site in the northwest quadrant of TH 55 and CSAH 9. The current site is being operated as Dundee Nursery and the Plymouth Presbyterian Church and a City Metro Link Park and Ride location (parking lot of the Plymouth Presbyterian Church). The site is proposed to be redeveloped into a mixed-use

development with a medical office building, multi-family residential building, along with the existing church with a preschool which will remain on the site.

Link to Document: <https://bit.ly/30MPYIz>

First Public Meeting Date: April 21, 2021

First Public Meeting Time: 7:00 p.m.

First Public Meeting Location Name and Address: Planning Commission, Plymouth City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55447

First Link to Public Meeting

Online: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_26ggEf8BSE2ASaLDEB9ycw

Second Public Meeting Date: May 11, 2021

Second Public Meeting Time: 7:00 p.m.

Second Public Meeting Location Name and Address: City Council, Plymouth City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55447

Second Link to Public Meeting

Online: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7MZv3MNyTmKoyYnNhmlwqA

RGU: City of Plymouth

RGU Contact: Lori Summers, 763-509-5457, lsommers@plymouthmn.gov

General Notice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW SCOPING MEETING

Issued: March 17, 2021

In the Matter of the Application of Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Certificate of Need, Site Permit, and Route Permit for an up to 308 MW Wind Farm and Associated 161 kV Transmission Line in Cottonwood, Martin, and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota

PUC Docket Numbers: IP7013/CN-19-408, IP7013/WS-19-619, IP7013/TL-19-621

In the Matter of the Application of Red Rock Solar, LLC for a Certificate of Need and Site Permit for an up to 60 MW Solar Facility in Cottonwood County, Minnesota

PUC Docket Numbers: IP7014/CN-19-486, IP7014/GS-19-620

Date: April 1, 2021

Time: 6:00 PM*

Location: Remote-Access Meeting (telephone and/or internet)

*The meeting will end when all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been concluded.

To find out if a meeting is canceled call 1-855-731-6208 or 651-201-2213 or visit mn.gov/puc.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) will hold a remote-access public meeting on the applications of Big Bend Wind, LLC (Big Bend) and Red Rock Solar, LLC (Red Rock) for their proposed wind farm, solar facility, and high voltage transmission line (HVTL). The purpose of the public meeting is to inform the public about the review process to be used, and the projects being proposed, to obtain public input on the proposed projects, and to compile the record for the Commission to consider in making a final decision on the permits. **Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the remote-access public meeting will replace the standard in-person meeting. Similar to an in-person meeting, the remote-access meeting will provide interested persons the opportunity to: (1) provide comments regarding the need for the proposed projects; and (2) ask questions and provide comments on potential issues to be considered by the Commission in its decision-making process or included as a condition in the final site permit and route permit.**

How to Attend the Meeting

To participate, follow the directions below to access the meeting over the telephone to listen and/or provide verbal comments (audio only). If you are also interested in accessing the video portion of the meeting, follow the directions below to view the presentation over the internet (video only – no audio). **You must, at a minimum, join the meeting by telephone if you are interested in listening to the meeting and/or in providing verbal comments on the proposed project.** If you wish to watch the video stream with audio you must join by both phone and internet. Written comments may also be submitted during the comment period following the meeting using the methods described in this notice.

To attend the 6:00 pm meeting: Join the meeting by telephone Phone: 1-866-609-6127 Conference ID: 5195488 An operator will assist you	Join the meeting by internet (video only – no audio) Navigate on your computer to: https://tinyurl.com/yxhr8ftn or https://minnesota.webex.com Event Number: 187 452 7806 Event Password, if needed: MPUC
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Please contact Bret Eknes, Public Advisor if you have questions on how to participate or have trouble accessing the meeting at Bret.Eknes@state.mn.us or 651-201-2236.

Project Description

Big Bend Wind, LLC (Big Bend), an affiliate of Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC, has filed applications with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for a certificate of need, a site permit, and a route permit for an up-to 308 megawatt (MW) large wind energy conversion system and an approximately 18-mile 161kV transmission line (Big Bend Wind Project). Big Bend is considering three wind turbine models with 5.5 MW to 5.7 MW capacity which would involve between 54 and 55 turbines but has not finalized its decision.

In addition to the turbines and related equipment, the Big Bend Wind Project would also include: gravel access roads, underground and/or above ground electrical collection and communication lines, one operation and maintenance facility, a project substation, up to one meteorological tower, a Sonic Detection and Ranging or Light Detection and Ranging unit, up to four Aircraft Detection Lighting System radars, and, if needed, one temporary batch plant area.

The associated 161 kV transmission line is needed to interconnect the Big Bend Wind and Red Rock Solar Farms to the transmission grid. It will be located in Midway, Mountain Lake, Odin, and Cedar Townships in Cottonwood, Watonwan, and Martin Counties and will interconnect

with the existing 345 kV transmission line at either the Crandall Switching Station or the Lakefield Junction Station, both located in Martin County.

Red Rock Solar, LLC, (Red Rock) an affiliate of Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC, has filed with the Commission separate applications for a certificate of need and a site permit for an up-to 60 MW solar energy generating system on approximately 483 acres of land in Cottonwood County (Red Rock Solar Project). The primary components of the facility would include photovoltaic panels installed on a tracking rack system, electrical inverters, an electrical collection system, fencing, access roads, up to three weather stations, a project substation, and 10 stormwater drainage basins. The power produced by the Red Rock Solar Project would be transferred to the grid on the proposed transmission line associated with the Big Bend Wind Project.

The Big Bend Wind and Red Rock Solar Projects are proposed to be a hybrid wind and solar renewable energy project that would together generate up to 335 MW of electricity.

Submit Comments

Topics Open for Public Comment:

Please focus your comments on information that will help answer the following questions:

Big Bend Wind

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the environmental assessment (EA), and/or the draft site permit?
- What are possible methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered to address potential impacts associated with the 161 kV transmission line?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed site or the project that should be considered?
- Are there other ways to meet the stated need for the project, for example, a different size project or a different type of facility? If so, what alternatives to the project should be studied in the EA?
- Are there any items missing or mischaracterized in any of the applications or issues that need further development?

Red Rock Solar

- 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?
- Are there other ways to meet the stated need for the project, for example, a different size project or a different type of facility?
- Are there any items missing or mischaracterized in the certificate of need or site permit applications or issues that need further development?

Comment Period: Comments accepted through **April 30, 2021 at 4:30 PM**

Comments received after the close of the comment period may or may not be considered by the Commission.

Comments may be submitted by any of the following means:

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

Email: Richard.Davis@state.mn.us

US Mail: Richard Davis, Environmental Review Manager

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

85 7th Place East, Suite 500

Saint Paul, MN 55101

Fax: 651-539-0109

Important: Comments will be made available to the public via the Public Utilities Commission's website, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The Commission does not edit or delete personal identifying information from submissions.

Process Information

Big Bend Wind

The Commission must approve a certificate of need, a site permit, and a route permit before the proposed Big Bend Wind project can be built. The permitting process provides for extensive citizen participation and includes several opportunities for public input such as public meetings, public comment periods, and public hearings. The information gathered throughout the permitting process informs the Commission's final decision on a permit. The permitting process begins with the Commission's acceptance of a permit application. The Commission accepted Big Bend Wind's applications as substantially complete on March 11, 2021. The review time generally varies between 6 to 12 months depending on the size, type, and complexity of the project.

Following the written comment period associated with the public information and scoping meeting, the Department will prepare and propose an EA scoping decision and a preliminary draft site permit for the Commission to consider. The Commission will utilize the Department's preliminary draft site permit, as well as any revisions they feel are reasonable and appropriate, to issue a draft site permit. Once the EA scoping decision is issued, the Department will prepare the EA. Upon completion of the EA, a public hearing will be held to answer questions and to solicit comments on the draft site permit. Following the close of the comment period on the EA and draft site permit, a contested case hearing will be held in the project area. The hearing will be conducted by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from the Office of Administrative Hearings. The hearing will provide an opportunity for interested persons to ask questions, provide verbal and written comments, and present evidence on all components of the proposed project. The ALJ will submit a report to the Commission containing findings, conclusions, and a recommendation. Upon receipt of the report from the ALJ, the Commission will make a decision on the certificate of need, site permit, and route permit applications.

For statute and rule information see Minn. Stat. § 216B.243 and Minn. R. ch. 7849 (certificate of need); Minn. Stat. § 216F and Minn. R. ch. 7854 (site permit); Minn. Stat. § 216E and Minn. R. ch. 7850 (route permit) at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov>.

Red Rock Solar

The Commission must approve a certificate of need and a site permit before the project can be constructed. The certificate of need and site permit applications are being processed jointly

and will be reviewed using the informal review process (Minn. R. 7829.1200) and alternative review process (Minn. R. 7850.2800 to 7850.3900), respectively. This meeting satisfies the public meeting requirement for both the certificate of need application (Minn. R. 7849.1400) and site permit application (Minn. R. 7850.3500). Relevant Minnesota statute and rules may be viewed at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov>.

The Department is tasked with preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the solar site and route permit applications filed under the alternative permitting process. In this case, environmental review has been combined and an EA will be prepared instead of an ER. The EA will evaluate the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project, identify measures that could reasonably be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts identified, and will include the analysis of alternatives required under the review processes.

When the EA is complete, a public hearing will be held near the project area. The hearing will be presided over by an ALJ from the Office of Administrative Hearings. Members of the public will have an opportunity to speak, provide written comments, and ask questions of the applicant and staff. Upon completion of the public hearing process, the Commission will make a final decision on whether to issue a certificate of need and site permit.

How to Learn More

Department of Commerce Project Websites:

Big Bend Wind Project - <https://mn.gov/eera/web/project/14153/>
Big Bend Wind Project HVTL - <https://mn.gov/eera/web/project/14156/>
Red Rock Solar Project - <https://mn.gov/eera/web/project/14155/>

Project Mailing List: Sign up to receive notices about project milestones and opportunities to participate (meetings, comment periods, etc.). Contact docketing.puc@state.mn.us or 651-201-2246 with the docket numbers (19-408, 19-619, or 19-621) for the Big Bend Wind Project or (19-486 or 19-620) for the Red Rock Solar Project, your name, mailing address, and email address.

Subscribe to the Docket: Receive email notification when new documents are filed in this matter at eFiling.com, or go to mn.gov/puc, select *Comment*, and follow the prompts. *Note - subscribing may result in a large number of emails.

Full Case Record: See all documents filed in this docket via the Commission's website - mn.gov/puc, select *eDockets*, enter the year 19 and docket number 408 (CN), 619 (site permit), or 621 (route permit) for the Big Bend Wind Project. Enter year 19 and docket number 486 (CN) or 620 (site permit) for the Red Rock Solar Project, select *Search*.

Community Locations: The Big Bend and Red Rock CN and permit applications are available at these locations:

- Mountain Lake Public Library, 1054 Fourth Ave, Mountain Lake, MN 56159
- Butterfield Library, 111 Second St N, Butterfield, MN 56120
- Martin County Library, 190 W. Main St., Trimont, MN 56176

Note: Due to the Covid-19 pandemic your local library may be closed or have limited hours.

Project Contacts

Public Utilities Commission Public Advisor

Bret Eknes – Bret.Eknes@state.mn.us or 651-201-2236

Public Utilities Commission Energy Facilities Planners

Cezar Panait – Cezar.Panait@state.mn.us or 651-201-2207

Charley Bruce – Charley.Bruce@state.mn.us or 651-201-2251

Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager

Rich Davis – Rich.Davis@state.mn.us or 651-539-1846

Big Bend Wind and Red Rock Solar Project Contacts

Brenna Gunderson – Brenna.gunderson@apexcleanenergy.com or 612-260-6614

Dylan Ikkala – Dylan.Ikkala@apexcleanenergy.com or 484-364-9298

Links to environmental review documents were provided by the RGU. In the event that the link does not work, you may contact the RGU directly to request either a paper or electronic copy of the documents. If you are not able to connect with the RGU, please email EQB staff at Env.Review@state.mn.us, call 651.757.2873, or visit our [website](#).

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