



Company Snapshot

Carolina Solar Energy (CSE) develops utility scale photovoltaic (PV) solar energy projects in North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky. Founded in 2004, CSE built the first utility scale solar energy project in the Southeastern US, and has developed over 800MW of solar projects that are in operation or preparing for construction as of spring 2020.

CSE is dedicated to reducing the cost of solar energy, to bringing economic development to underserved areas, and to increasing the use of renewable energy. We believe solar is an important part of the effort to build an affordable and sustainable energy future.

Our Operating Projects

Operating Solar Projects Developed by CSE in North Carolina (Total 491.97MWdc)	
GE Aviation/Durham (April '11, 770kw)	Hardison Farm/Martin (Sept '16, 7MW)
Person County II/Person (Sept '11, 1.25MW)	Modlin Farm/Martin (Sept '16, 7MW)
Whiteville-Bowman/Columbus (Dec '12, 7MW)	White Farm/Northampton (Sept '16, 7MW)
Warrenton/Warren (Dec '12, 6.5MW)	Southerland Farm/Vance (Nov '16, 7MW)
Fagan Farm/ (April '13, 250kw)	Sedberry Farm/Moore (Dec '16, 7MW)
Lenoir I/Lenoir (June '13, 6.5MW)	Schell Farm/Northampton (Dec '16, 7MW)
Lenoir II/Lenoir (June '13, 6.5MW)	Exum Farm/Lenoir (Dec '16, 6.5MW)
Wilson I/Wilson (July '13, 6.5MW)	Bunn Level Farm/Harnett (Dec '16, 7MW)
Bolton Farm/Warren (Sept '13, 6.5MW)	Hood Farm/Jones (May '17, 7MW)
Dement Farm/Vance (Sept '13, 6.5MW)	Boaz/Lee (May '17, 7MW)
McCallum Farm/Robeson (Nov '13, 6.5MW)	Haywood/Montgomery (June '17, 7MW)
Martin Creek Farm/Vance (March '14, 3.9MW)	ABD/Randolph (Dec '17, 7MW)
Oakboro Farm/Scotland (July '14, 6.5MW)	Bullock/Vance (Dec '17, 70.2MW)
Downs Farm/Hertford (July '15, 6.5MW)	Kalish/Montgomery (June '18, 7MW)
Millikan Farm/Randolph (Oct '15, 7MW)	Fox Creek/Franklin (Dec '18, 70.2MW)
Green Farm/Martin (Feb '16, 7MW)	Brantley/Nash (Dec '18, 70.2MW)
Simons Farm/Hertford (June '16, 7MW)	Buckleberry/Pitt (Dec '18, 70.2MW)
Cohen Farm/Lee (Aug '16, 7MW)	Tides Lane/Nash (June '19, 7MW)
Stone Farm/Robeson (Aug '16, 7MW)	McGrigor/Sampson (Oct '19, 7MW)

Exhibit A

Operating Solar Projects Developed, Constructed and Financed by CSE in North Carolina (Total 4.3MWdc)
NC State University Department of Energy Demonstration/Wake (Oct '07, 75.6kw)*
North Carolina Zoo/Randolph (Nov '07, 104kw)
EM Johnson Water Treatment Plant/Wake (Nov '09, 255kw)
Person County I/Person (Aug '09, 650kw)
Person County Airport/Person (Aug '12, 3MW)
Timberlake/Person (Aug '12, 250kw)

*this project was the first utility scale solar project built in the Southeast.

Projects in Construction/Preparing for Construction in 2020-2021

Solar Projects Developed by CSE in Virginia & North Carolina (Total 306MWdc)	
Bluestone (Mecklenburg County Virginia, 65MW)	Sunnybrook (Halifax County Virginia, 65MW)
Hawtree (Warren County NC, 85MW)	Powells Creek (Halifax County Virginia, 91MW)

New Project Pipeline

CSE is developing new solar projects in North Carolina and Kentucky. These projects are progressing through the PJM and Duke Energy interconnection process, and preparing for construction starting in 2022-2023.

Awards

Solar Power World - Top 500 U.S. Solar Contractors List 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 (#31), and 2019 (#20) *Ranks are determined by the number of kilowatts (DC) a company was involved with installing*
NC Sustainable Energy Association Award - Individual Leadership (CEO Richard Harkrader) 2014
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Canadian Solar Environmental Impact Award for Person County Solar Park I 2010
City of Raleigh Environment Award for Pioneering Efforts 2009
NC Sustainable Energy Association Award - Renewable Energy Business of the Year 2009
NC GreenPower Award for First NC Grid Tied PV Solar System 2008
Southeast Green Power Summit Trailblazer Award (CEO Richard Harkrader) 2003

Memberships and Board Positions

NC Sustainable Energy Association Member (Richard Harkrader past Board Chair)
NC Clean Energy Business Alliance (Richard Harkrader Executive Committee Board Member, founding Board Member, Chair of the 2020 Legislative Committee)
Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA) Member
MDV-SEIA (Virginia chapter of SEIA) Member
MAREC (Mid Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition) Member
PJM Member
Kentucky Solar Industry Association (KYSIA) Member



NC CLEAN ENERGY

TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Health and Safety Impacts of Solar Photovoltaics

MAY 2017





Health and Safety Impacts of Solar Photovoltaics

The increasing presence of utility-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) systems (sometimes referred to as solar farms) is a rather new development in North Carolina's landscape. Due to the new and unknown nature of this technology, it is natural for communities near such developments to be concerned about health and safety impacts. Unfortunately, the quick emergence of utility-scale solar has cultivated fertile grounds for myths and half-truths about the health impacts of this technology, which can lead to unnecessary fear and conflict.

Photovoltaic (PV) technologies and solar inverters are not known to pose any significant health dangers to their neighbors. The most important dangers posed are increased highway traffic during the relative short construction period and dangers posed to trespassers of contact with high voltage equipment. This latter risk is mitigated by signage and the security measures that industry uses to deter trespassing. As will be discussed in more detail below, risks of site contamination are much less than for most other industrial uses because PV technologies employ few toxic chemicals and those used are used in very small quantities. Due to the reduction in the pollution from fossil-fuel-fired electric generators, the overall impact of solar development on human health is overwhelmingly positive. This pollution reduction results from a partial replacement of fossil-fuel fired generation by emission-free PV-generated electricity, which reduces harmful sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). Analysis from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, both affiliates of the U.S. Department of Energy, estimates the health-related air quality benefits to the southeast region from solar PV generators to be worth 8.0 ¢ per kilowatt-hour of solar generation.¹ This is in addition to the value of the electricity and suggests that the air quality benefits of solar are worth more than the electricity itself.

Even though we have only recently seen large-scale installation of PV technologies, the technology and its potential impacts have been studied since the 1950s. A combination of this solar-specific research and general scientific research has led to the scientific community having a good understanding of the science behind potential health and safety impacts of solar energy. This paper utilizes the latest scientific literature and knowledge of solar practices in N.C. to address the health and safety risks associated with solar PV technology. These risks are extremely small, far less than those associated with common activities such as driving a car, and vastly outweighed by health benefits of the generation of clean electricity.

This paper addresses the potential health and safety impacts of solar PV development in North Carolina, organized into the following four categories:

- (1) Hazardous Materials
- (2) Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)
- (3) Electric Shock and Arc Flash
- (4) Fire Safety

1. Hazardous Materials

One of the more common concerns towards solar is that the panels (referred to as “modules” in the solar industry) consist of toxic materials that endanger public health. However, as shown in this section, solar energy systems may contain small amounts of toxic materials, but these materials do not endanger public health. To understand potential toxic hazards coming from a solar project, one must understand system installation, materials used, the panel end-of-life protocols, and system operation. This section will examine these aspects of a solar farm and the potential for toxicity impacts in the following subsections:

- (1.2) Project Installation/Construction
 - (1.2) System Components
 - 1.2.1 Solar Panels: Construction and Durability
 - 1.2.2 Photovoltaic technologies
 - (a) Crystalline Silicon
 - (b) Cadmium Telluride (CdTe)
 - (c) CIS/CIGS
 - 1.2.3 Panel End of Life Management
 - 1.2.4 Non-panel System Components
 - (1.3) Operations and Maintenance

1.1 Project Installation/Construction

The system installation, or construction, process does not require toxic chemicals or processes. The site is mechanically cleared of large vegetation, fences are constructed, and the land is surveyed to layout exact installation locations. Trenches for underground wiring are dug and support posts are driven into the ground. The solar panels are bolted to steel and aluminum support structures and wired together. Inverter pads are installed, and an inverter and transformer are installed on each pad. Once everything is connected, the system is tested, and only then turned on.



Figure 1: Utility-scale solar facility (5 MW_{AC}) located in Catawba County. Source: Strata Solar

1.2 System Components

1.2.1 Solar Panels: Construction and Durability

Solar PV panels typically consist of glass, polymer, aluminum, copper, and semiconductor materials that can be recovered and recycled at the end of their useful life.² Today there are two PV technologies used in PV panels at utility-scale solar facilities, silicon, and thin film. As of 2016, all thin film used in North Carolina solar facilities are cadmium telluride (CdTe) panels from the US manufacturer First Solar, but there are other thin film PV panels available on the market, such as Solar Frontier's CIGS panels. Crystalline silicon technology consists of silicon wafers which are made into cells and assembled into panels, thin film technologies consist of thin layers of semiconductor material deposited onto glass, polymer or metal substrates. While there are differences in the components and manufacturing processes of these two types of solar technologies, many aspects of their PV panel construction are very similar. Specifics about each type of PV chemistry as it relates to toxicity are covered in subsections a, b, and c in section 1.2.2; on crystalline silicon, cadmium telluride, and CIS/CIGS respectively. The rest of this section applies equally to both silicon and thin film panels.

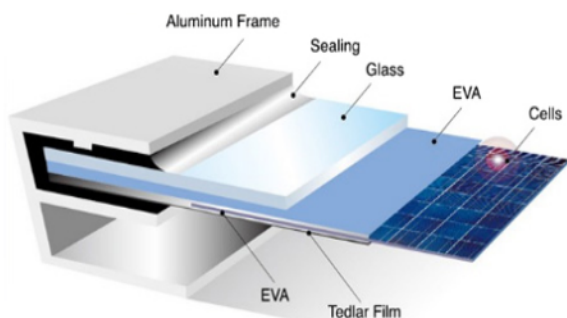


Figure 2: Components of crystalline silicon panels. The vast majority of silicon panels consist of a glass sheet on the topside with an aluminum frame providing structural support. Image Source: www.riteksolar.com.tw

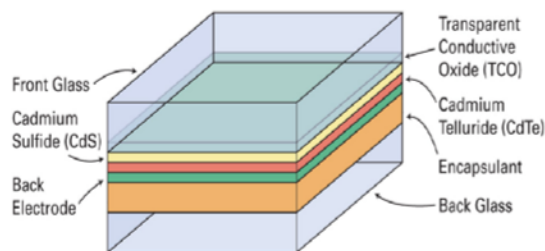


Figure 3: Layers of a common frameless thin-film panel (CdTe). Many thin film panels are frameless, including the most common thin-film panels, First Solar's CdTe. Frameless panels have protective glass on both the front and back of the panel. Layer thicknesses not to scale. Image Source: www.homepower.com

To provide decades of corrosion-free operation, PV cells in PV panels are encapsulated from air and moisture between two layers of plastic. The encapsulation layers are protected on the top with a layer of tempered glass and on the backside with a polymer sheet. Frameless modules include a protective layer of glass on the rear of the panel, which may also be tempered. The plastic ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA) commonly provides the cell encapsulation. For decades, this same material has been used between layers of tempered glass to give car windshields and hurricane windows their great strength. In the same way that a car windshield cracks but stays intact, the EVA layers in PV panels keep broken panels intact (see Figure 4). Thus, a damaged module does not generally create small pieces of debris; instead, it largely remains together as one piece.



Figure 4: The mangled PV panels in this picture illustrate the nature of broken solar panels; the glass cracks but the panel is still in one piece. Image Source: http://img.alibaba.com/photo/115259576/broken_solar_panel.jpg

PV panels constructed with the same basic components as modern panels have been installed across the globe for well over thirty years.³ The long-term durability and performance demonstrated over these decades, as well as the results of accelerated lifetime testing, helped lead to an industry-standard 25-year power production warranty for PV panels. These power warranties warrant a PV panel to produce at least 80% of their original nameplate production after 25 years of use. A recent SolarCity and DNV GL study reported that today's quality PV panels should be expected to reliably and efficiently produce power for thirty-five years.⁴

Local building codes require all structures, including ground mounted solar arrays, to be engineered to withstand anticipated wind speeds, as defined by the local wind speed requirements. Many racking products are available in versions engineered for wind speeds of up to 150 miles per hour, which is significantly higher than the wind speed requirement anywhere in North Carolina. The strength of PV mounting structures were demonstrated during Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and again during Hurricane Matthew in 2016. During Hurricane Sandy, the many large-scale solar facilities in New Jersey and New York at that time suffered only minor damage.⁵ In the fall of 2016, the US and Caribbean experienced destructive winds and torrential rains from Hurricane Matthew, yet one leading solar tracker manufacturer reported that their numerous systems in the impacted area received zero damage from wind or flooding.⁶

In the event of a catastrophic event capable of damaging solar equipment, such as a tornado, the system will almost certainly have property insurance that will cover the cost to cleanup and repair the project. It is in the best interest of the system owner to protect their investment against such risks. It is also in their interest to get the project repaired and producing full power as soon as possible. Therefore, the investment in adequate insurance is a wise business practice for the system owner. For the same

reasons, adequate insurance coverage is also generally a requirement of the bank or firm providing financing for the project.

1.2.2 Photovoltaic (PV) Technologies

a. Crystalline Silicon

This subsection explores the toxicity of silicon-based PV panels and concludes that they do not pose a material risk of toxicity to public health and safety. Modern crystalline silicon PV panels, which account for over 90% of solar PV panels installed today, are, more or less, a commodity product. The overwhelming majority of panels installed in North Carolina are crystalline silicon panels that are informally classified as Tier I panels. Tier I panels are from well-respected manufacturers that have a good chance of being able to honor warranty claims. Tier I panels are understood to be of high quality, with predictable performance, durability, and content. Well over 80% (by weight) of the content of a PV panel is the tempered glass front and the aluminum frame, both of which are common building materials. Most of the remaining portion are common plastics, including polyethylene terephthalate in the backsheet, EVA encapsulation of the PV cells, polyphenyl ether in the junction box, and polyethylene insulation on the wire leads. The active, working components of the system are the silicon photovoltaic cells, the small electrical leads connecting them together, and to the wires coming out of the back of the panel. The electricity generating and conducting components makeup less than 5% of the weight of most panels. The PV cell itself is nearly 100% silicon, and silicon is the second most common element in the Earth's crust. The silicon for PV cells is obtained by high-temperature processing of quartz sand (SiO_2) that removes its oxygen molecules. The refined silicon is converted to a PV cell by adding extremely small amounts of boron and phosphorus, both of which are common and of very low toxicity.

The other minor components of the PV cell are also generally benign; however, some contain lead, which is a human toxicant that is particularly harmful to young children. The minor components include an extremely thin antireflective coating (silicon nitride or titanium dioxide), a thin layer of aluminum on the rear, and thin strips of silver alloy that are screen-printed on the front and rear of cell.⁷ In order for the front and rear electrodes to make effective electrical contact with the proper layer of the PV cell, other materials (called glass frit) are mixed with the silver alloy and then heated to etch the metals into the cell. This glass frit historically contains a small amount of lead (Pb) in the form of lead oxide. The 60 or 72 PV cells in a PV panel are connected by soldering thin solder-covered copper tabs from the back of one cell to the front of the next cell. Traditionally a tin-based solder containing some lead (Pb) is used, but some manufacturers have switched to lead-free solder. The glass frit and/or the solder may contain trace amounts of other metals, potentially including some with human toxicity such as cadmium. However, testing to simulate the potential for leaching from broken panels, which is discussed in more detail below, did not find a potential toxicity threat from these trace elements. Therefore, the tiny amount of lead in the glass frit and the solder is the only part of silicon PV panels with a potential to create a negative health impact. However, as described below, the very limited amount of lead involved and its strong physical and chemical attachment to other components of the PV panel means that even in worst-case scenarios the health hazard it poses is insignificant.

As with many electronic industries, the solder in silicon PV panels has historically been a lead-based solder, often 36% lead, due to the superior properties of such solder. However, recent advances in lead-free solders have spurred a trend among PV panel manufacturers to reduce or remove the lead in their panels. According to the 2015 Solar Scorecard from the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, a group that tracks environmental responsibility of photovoltaic panel manufacturers, fourteen companies (increased from twelve companies in 2014) manufacture PV panels certified to meet the European Restriction of

Hazardous Substances (RoHS) standard. This means that the amount of cadmium and lead in the panels they manufacture fall below the RoHS thresholds, which are set by the European Union and serve as the world's de facto standard for hazardous substances in manufactured goods.⁸ The Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) standard requires that the maximum concentration found in any homogenous material in a produce is less than 0.01% cadmium and less than 0.10% lead, therefore, any solder can be no more than 0.10% lead.⁹

While some manufacturers are producing PV panels that meet the RoHS standard, there is no requirement that they do so because the RoHS Directive explicitly states that the directive does not apply to photovoltaic panels.¹⁰ The justification for this is provided in item 17 of the current RoHS Directive: "The development of renewable forms of energy is one of the Union's key objectives, and the contribution made by renewable energy sources to environmental and climate objectives is crucial. Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (4) recalls that there should be coherence between those objectives and other Union environmental legislation. Consequently, this Directive should not prevent the development of renewable energy technologies that have no negative impact on health and the environment and that are sustainable and economically viable."

The use of lead is common in our modern economy. However, only about 0.5% of the annual lead consumption in the U.S. is for electronic solder for all uses; PV solder makes up only a tiny portion of this 0.5%. Close to 90% of lead consumption in the US is in batteries, which do not encapsulate the pounds of lead contained in each typical automotive battery. This puts the lead in batteries at great risk of leaching into the environment. Estimates for the lead in a single PV panel with lead-based solder range from 1.6 to 24 grams of lead, with 13g (less than half of an ounce) per panel seen most often in the literature.¹¹ At 13 g/panel¹², each panel contains one-half of the lead in a typical 12-gauge shotgun shell. This amount equates to roughly 1/750th of the lead in a single car battery. In a panel, it is all durably encapsulated from air or water for the full life of the panel.¹⁴

As indicated by their 20 to 30-year power warranty, PV modules are designed for a long service life, generally over 25 years. For a panel to comply with its 25-year power warranty, its internal components, including lead, must be sealed from any moisture. Otherwise, they would corrode and the panel's output would fall below power warranty levels. Thus, the lead in operating PV modules is not at risk of release to the environment during their service lifetime. In extreme experiments, researchers have shown that lead can leach from crushed or pulverized panels.^{15, 16} However, more real-world tests designed to represent typical trash compaction that are used to classify waste as hazardous or non-hazardous show no danger from leaching.^{17, 18} For more information about PV panel end-of-life, see the Panel Disposal section.

As illustrated throughout this section, silicon-based PV panels do not pose a material threat to public health and safety. The only aspect of the panels with potential toxicity concerns is the very small amount of lead in some panels. However, any lead in a panel is well sealed from environmental exposure for the operating lifetime of the solar panel and thus not at risk of release into the environment.

b. Cadmium Telluride (CdTe) PV Panels

This subsection examines the components of a cadmium telluride (CdTe) PV panel. Research demonstrates that they pose negligible toxicity risk to public health and safety while significantly reducing the public's exposure to cadmium by reducing coal emissions. As of mid-2016, a few hundred MWs of

cadmium telluride (CdTe) panels, all manufactured by the U.S. company First Solar, have been installed in North Carolina.

Questions about the potential health and environmental impacts from the use of this PV technology are related to the concern that these panels contain cadmium, a toxic heavy metal. However, scientific studies have shown that cadmium telluride differs from cadmium due to its high chemical and thermal stability.¹⁹ Research has shown that the tiny amount of cadmium in these panels does not pose a health or safety risk.²⁰ Further, there are very compelling reasons to welcome its adoption due to reductions in unhealthy pollution associated with burning coal. Every GWh of electricity generated by burning coal produces about 4 grams of cadmium air emissions.²¹ Even though North Carolina produces a significant fraction of our electricity from coal, electricity from solar offsets much more natural gas than coal due to natural gas plants being able to adjust their rate of production more easily and quickly. If solar electricity offsets 90% natural gas and 10% coal, each 5-megawatt (5 MW_{AC}, which is generally 7 MW_{DC}) CdTe solar facility in North Carolina keeps about 157 grams, or about a third of a pound, of cadmium *out of our environment*.^{22, 23}

Cadmium is toxic, but all the approximately 7 grams of cadmium in one CdTe panel is in the form of a chemical compound cadmium telluride,²⁴ which has 1/100th the toxicity of free cadmium.²⁵ Cadmium telluride is a very stable compound that is non-volatile and non-soluble in water. Even in the case of a fire, research shows that less than 0.1% of the cadmium is released when a CdTe panel is exposed to fire. The fire melts the glass and encapsulates over 99.9% of the cadmium in the molten glass.²⁷

It is important to understand the source of the cadmium used to manufacture CdTe PV panels. The cadmium is a byproduct of zinc and lead refining. The element is collected from emissions and waste streams during the production of these metals and combined with tellurium to create the CdTe used in PV panels. If the cadmium were not collected for use in the PV panels or other products, it would otherwise either be stockpiled for future use, cemented and buried, or disposed of.²⁸ Nearly all the cadmium in old or broken panels can be recycled which can eventually serve as the primary source of cadmium for new PV panels.²⁹

Similar to silicon-based PV panels, CdTe panels are constructed of a tempered glass front, one instead of two clear plastic encapsulation layers, and a rear heat strengthened glass backing (together >98% by weight). The final product is built to withstand exposure to the elements without significant damage for over 25 years. While not representative of damage that may occur in the field or even at a landfill, laboratory evidence has illustrated that when panels are ground into a fine powder, very acidic water is able to leach portions of the cadmium and tellurium,³⁰ similar to the process used to recycle CdTe panels. Like many silicon-based panels, CdTe panels are reported (as far back as 1998³¹) to pass the EPA's Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) test, which tests the potential for crushed panels in a landfill to leach hazardous substances into groundwater.³² Passing this test means that they are classified as non-hazardous waste and can be deposited in landfills.^{33,34} For more information about PV panel end-of-life, see the Panel Disposal section.

There is also concern of environmental impact resulting from potential catastrophic events involving CdTe PV panels. An analysis of worst-case scenarios for environmental impact from CdTe PV panels, including earthquakes, fires, and floods, was conducted by the University of Tokyo in 2013. After reviewing the extensive international body of research on CdTe PV technology, their report concluded, "Even in the worst-case scenarios, it is unlikely that the Cd concentrations in air and sea water will exceed the environmental regulation values."³⁵ In a worst-case scenario of damaged panels abandoned on the ground, insignificant amounts of cadmium will leach from the panels. This is because this scenario is

much less conducive (larger module pieces, less acidity) to leaching than the conditions of the EPA's TCLP test used to simulate landfill conditions, which CdTe panels pass.³⁶

First Solar, a U.S. company, and the only significant supplier of CdTe panels, has a robust panel take-back and recycling program that has been operating commercially since 2005.³⁷ The company states that it is “committed to providing a commercially attractive recycling solution for photovoltaic (PV) power plant and module owners to help them meet their module (end of life) EOL obligation simply, cost-effectively and responsibly.” First Solar global recycling services to their customers to collect and recycle panels once they reach the end of productive life whether due to age or damage. These recycling service agreements are structured to be financially attractive to both First Solar and the solar panel owner. For First Solar, the contract provides the company with an affordable source of raw materials needed for new panels and presumably a diminished risk of undesired release of Cd. The contract also benefits the solar panel owner by allowing them to avoid tipping fees at a waste disposal site. The legal contract helps provide peace of mind by ensuring compliance by both parties when considering the continuing trend of rising disposal costs and increasing regulatory requirements.

c. CIS/CIGS and other PV technologies

Copper indium gallium selenide PV technology, often referred to as CIGS, is the second most common type of thin-film PV panel but a distant second behind CdTe. CIGS cells are composed of a thin layer of copper, indium, gallium, and selenium on a glass or plastic backing. None of these elements are very toxic, although selenium is a regulated metal under the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).³⁸ The cells often also have an extremely thin layer of cadmium sulfide that contains a tiny amount of cadmium, which is toxic. The promise of high efficiency CIGS panels drove heavy investment in this technology in the past. However, researchers have struggled to transfer high efficiency success in the lab to low-cost full-scale panels in the field.³⁹ Recently, a CIGS manufacturer based in Japan, Solar Frontier, has achieved some market success with a rigid, glass-faced CIGS module that competes with silicon panels. Solar Frontier produces the majority of CIS panels on the market today.⁴⁰ Notably, these panels are RoHS compliant,⁴¹ thus meeting the rigorous toxicity standard adopted by the European Union even though this directive exempts PV panels. The authors are unaware of any completed or proposed utility-scale system in North Carolina using CIS/CIGS panels.

1.2.3 Panel End-of-Life Management

Concerns about the volume, disposal, toxicity, and recycling of PV panels are addressed in this subsection. To put the volume of PV waste into perspective, consider that by 2050, when PV systems installed in 2020 will reach the end of their lives, it is estimated that the global annual PV panel waste tonnage will be 10% of the 2014 global e-waste tonnage.⁴² In the U.S., end-of-life disposal of solar products is governed by the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), as well as state policies in some situations. RCRA separates waste into hazardous (not accepted at ordinary landfill) and solid waste (generally accepted at ordinary landfill) based on a series of rules. According to RCRA, the way to determine if a PV panel is classified as hazardous waste is the Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) test. This EPA test is designed to simulate landfill disposal and determine the risk of hazardous substances leaching out of the landfill.^{43,44,45} Multiple sources report that most modern PV panels (both crystalline silicon and cadmium telluride) pass the TCLP test.^{46,47} Some studies found that some older (1990s) crystalline silicon panels, and perhaps some newer crystalline silicon panels (specifics are not given about vintage of panels tested), do not pass the lead (Pb) leachate limits in the TCLP test.^{48,}

⁴⁹

The test begins with the crushing of a panel into centimeter-sized pieces. The pieces are then mixed in an acid bath. After tumbling for eighteen hours, the fluid is tested for forty hazardous substances that all must be below specific threshold levels to pass the test. Research comparing TCLP conditions to conditions of damaged panels in the field found that simulated landfill conditions provide overly conservative estimates of leaching for field-damaged panels.⁵⁰ Additionally, research in Japan has found no detectable Cd leaching from cracked CdTe panels when exposed to simulated acid rain.⁵¹

Although modern panels can generally be landfilled, they can also be recycled. Even though recent waste volume has not been adequate to support significant PV-specific recycling infrastructure, the existing recycling industry in North Carolina reports that it recycles much of the current small volume of broken PV panels. In an informal survey conducted by the NC Clean Energy Technology Center survey in early 2016, seven of the eight large active North Carolina utility-scale solar developers surveyed reported that they send damaged panels back to the manufacturer and/or to a local recycler. Only one developer reported sending damaged panels to the landfill.

The developers reported at that time that they are usually paid a small amount per panel by local recycling firms. In early 2017, a PV developer reported that a local recycler was charging a small fee per panel to recycle damaged PV panels. The local recycling firm known to authors to accept PV panels described their current PV panel recycling practice as of early 2016 as removing the aluminum frame for local recycling and removing the wire leads for local copper recycling. The remainder of the panel is sent to a facility for processing the non-metallic portions of crushed vehicles, referred to as “fluff” in the recycling industry.⁵² This processing within existing general recycling plants allows for significant material recovery of major components, including glass which is 80% of the module weight, but at lower yields than PV-specific recycling plants. Notably almost half of the material value in a PV panel is in the few grams of silver contained in almost every PV panel produced today. In the long-term, dedicated PV panel recycling plants can increase treatment capacities and maximize revenues resulting in better output quality and the ability to recover a greater fraction of the useful materials.⁵³ PV-specific panel recycling technologies have been researched and implemented to some extent for the past decade, and have been shown to be able to recover over 95% of PV material (semiconductor) and over 90% of the glass in a PV panel.⁵⁴

A look at global PV recycling trends hints at the future possibilities of the practice in our country. Europe installed MW-scale volumes of PV years before the U.S. In 2007, a public-private partnership between the European Union and the solar industry set up a voluntary collection and recycling system called PV CYCLE. This arrangement was later made mandatory under the EU’s WEEE directive, a program for waste electrical and electronic equipment.⁵⁵ Its member companies (PV panel producers) fully finance the association. This makes it possible for end-users to return the member companies’ defective panels for recycling at any of the over 300 collection points around Europe without added costs. Additionally, PV CYCLE will pick up batches of 40 or more used panels at no cost to the user. This arrangement has been very successful, collecting and recycling over 13,000 tons by the end of 2015.⁵⁶

In 2012, the WEEE Directive added the end-of-life collection and recycling of PV panels to its scope.⁵⁷ This directive is based on the principle of extended-producer-responsibility. It has a global impact because producers that want to sell into the EU market are legally responsible for end-of-life management. Starting in 2018, this directive targets that 85% of PV products “put in the market” in Europe are recovered and 80% is prepared for reuse and recycling.

The success of the PV panel collection and recycling practices in Europe provides promise for the future of recycling in the U.S. In mid-2016, the US Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA) announced that they are starting a national solar panel recycling program with the guidance and support of many

leading PV panel producers.⁵⁸ The program will aggregate the services offered by recycling vendors and PV manufacturers, which will make it easier for consumers to select a cost-effective and environmentally responsible end-of-life management solution for their PV products. According to SEIA, they are planning the program in an effort to make the entire industry landfill-free. In addition to the national recycling network program, the program will provide a portal for system owners and consumers with information on how to responsibly recycle their PV systems.

While a cautious approach toward the potential for negative environmental and/or health impacts from retired PV panels is fully warranted, this section has shown that the positive health impacts of reduced emissions from fossil fuel combustion from PV systems more than outweighs any potential risk. Testing shows that silicon and CdTe panels are both safe to dispose of in landfills, and are also safe in worst case conditions of abandonment or damage in a disaster. Additionally, analysis by local engineers has found that the current salvage value of the equipment in a utility scale PV facility generally exceeds general contractor estimates for the cost to remove the entire PV system.^{59, 60, 61}

1.2.4 Non-Panel System Components (racking, wiring, inverter, transformer)

While previous toxicity subsections discussed PV panels, this subsection describes the non-panel components of utility-scale PV systems and investigates any potential public health and safety concerns. The most significant non-panel component of a ground-mounted PV system is the mounting structure of the rows of panels, commonly referred to as “racking”. The vertical post portion of the racking is galvanized steel and the remaining above-ground racking components are either galvanized steel or aluminum, which are both extremely common and benign building materials. The inverters that make the solar generated electricity ready to send to the grid have weather-proof steel enclosures that protect the working components from the elements. The only fluids that they might contain are associated with their cooling systems, which are not unlike the cooling system in a computer. Many inverters today are RoHS compliant.

The electrical transformers (to boost the inverter output voltage to the voltage of the utility connection point) do contain a liquid cooling oil. However, the fluid used for that function is either a non-toxic mineral oil or a biodegradable non-toxic vegetable oil, such as BIOTEMP from ABB. These vegetable transformer oils have the additional advantage of being much less flammable than traditional mineral oils. Significant health hazards are associated with old transformers containing cooling oil with toxic PCBs. Transfers with PCB-containing oil were common before PCBs were outlawed in the U.S. in 1979. PCBs still exist in older transformers in the field across the country.

Other than a few utility research sites, there are no batteries on- or off-site associated with utility-scale solar energy facilities in North Carolina, avoiding any potential health or safety concerns related to battery technologies. However, as battery technologies continue to improve and prices continue to decline we are likely to start seeing some batteries at solar facilities. Lithium ion batteries currently dominate the world utility-scale battery market, which are not very toxic. No non-panel system components were found to pose any health or environmental dangers.

1.4 Operations and Maintenance – Panel Washing and Vegetation Control

Throughout the eastern U.S., the climate provides frequent and heavy enough rain to keep panels adequately clean. This dependable weather pattern eliminates the need to wash the panels on a regular basis. Some system owners may choose to wash panels as often as once a year to increase production, but most in N.C. do not regularly wash any PV panels. Dirt build up over time may justify panel washing a few times over the panels' lifetime; however, nothing more than soap and water are required for this activity.

The maintenance of ground-mounted PV facilities requires that vegetation be kept low, both for aesthetics and to avoid shading of the PV panels. Several approaches are used to maintain vegetation at NC solar facilities, including planting of limited-height species, mowing, weed-eating, herbicides, and grazing livestock (sheep). The following descriptions of vegetation maintenance practices are based on interviews with several solar developers as well as with three maintenance firms that together are contracted to maintain well over 100 of the solar facilities in N.C. The majority of solar facilities in North Carolina maintain vegetation primarily by mowing. Each row of panels has a single row of supports, allowing sickle mowers to mow under the panels. The sites usually require mowing about once a month during the growing season. Some sites employ sheep to graze the site, which greatly reduces the human effort required to maintain the vegetation and produces high quality lamb meat.⁶²

In addition to mowing and weed eating, solar facilities often use some herbicides. Solar facilities generally do not spray herbicides over the entire acreage; rather they apply them only in strategic locations such as at the base of the perimeter fence, around exterior vegetative buffer, on interior dirt roads, and near the panel support posts. Also unlike many row crop operations, solar facilities generally use only general use herbicides, which are available over the counter, as opposed to restricted use herbicides commonly used in commercial agriculture that require a special restricted use license. The herbicides used at solar facilities are primarily 2-4-D and glyphosate (Round-up®), which are two of the most common herbicides used in lawns, parks, and agriculture across the country. One maintenance firm that was interviewed sprays the grass with a class of herbicide known as a growth regulator in order to slow the growth of grass so that mowing is only required twice a year. Growth regulators are commonly used on highway roadsides and golf courses for the same purpose. A commercial pesticide applicator license is required for anyone other than the landowner to apply herbicides, which helps ensure that all applicators are adequately educated about proper herbicide use and application. The license must be renewed annually and requires passing of a certification exam appropriate to the area in which the applicator wishes to work. Based on the limited data available, it appears that solar facilities in N.C. generally use significantly less herbicides per acre than most commercial agriculture or lawn maintenance services.

2. Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

PV systems do not emit any material during their operation; however, they do generate electromagnetic fields (EMF), sometimes referred to as radiation. EMF produced by electricity is non-ionizing radiation, meaning the radiation has enough energy to move atoms in a molecule around (experienced as heat), but not enough energy to remove electrons from an atom or molecule (ionize) or to damage DNA. As shown below, modern humans are all exposed to EMF throughout our daily lives without negative health impact. Someone outside of the fenced perimeter of a solar facility is not exposed to significant EMF from the solar facility. Therefore, there is no negative health impact from the EMF

produced in a solar farm. The following paragraphs provide some additional background and detail to support this conclusion.

Since the 1970s, some have expressed concern over potential health consequences of EMF from electricity, but no studies have ever shown this EMF to cause health problems.⁶³ These concerns are based on some epidemiological studies that found a slight increase in childhood leukemia associated with average exposure to residential power-frequency magnetic fields above 0.3 to 0.4 μT (microteslas) (equal to 3.0 to 4.0 mG (milligauss)). μT and mG are both units used to measure magnetic field strength. For comparison, the average exposure for people in the U.S. is one mG or 0.1 μT , with about 1% of the population with an average exposure in excess of 0.4 μT (or 4 mG).⁶⁴ These epidemiological studies, which found an association but not a causal relationship, led the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to classify ELF magnetic fields as "possibly carcinogenic to humans". Coffee also has this classification. This classification means there is limited evidence but not enough evidence to designate as either a "probable carcinogen" or "human carcinogen". Overall, there is very little concern that ELF EMF damages public health. The only concern that does exist is for long-term exposure above 0.4 μT (4 mG) that may have some connection to increased cases of childhood leukemia. In 1997, the National Academies of Science were directed by Congress to examine this concern and concluded:

"Based on a comprehensive evaluation of published studies relating to the effects of power-frequency electric and magnetic fields on cells, tissues, and organisms (including humans), the conclusion of the committee is that the current body of evidence does not show that exposure to these fields presents a human-health hazard. Specifically, no conclusive and consistent evidence shows that exposures to residential electric and magnetic fields produce cancer, adverse neurobehavioral effects, or reproductive and developmental effects."⁶⁵

There are two aspects to electromagnetic fields, an electric field and a magnetic field. The electric field is generated by voltage and the magnetic field is generated by electric current, i.e., moving electrons. A task group of scientific experts convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005 concluded that there were no substantive health issues related to *electric* fields (0 to 100,000 Hz) at levels generally encountered by members of the public.⁶⁶ The relatively low voltages in a solar facility and the fact that electric fields are easily shielded (i.e., blocked) by common materials, such as plastic, metal, or soil means that there is no concern of negative health impacts from the electric fields generated by a solar facility. Thus, the remainder of this section addresses magnetic fields. Magnetic fields are not shielded by most common materials and thus can easily pass through them. Both types of fields are strongest close to the source of electric generation and weaken quickly with distance from the source.

The direct current (DC) electricity produced by PV panels produce stationary (0 Hz) electric and magnetic fields. Because of minimal concern about potential risks of stationary fields, little scientific research has examined stationary fields' impact on human health.⁶⁷ In even the largest PV facilities, the DC voltages and currents are not very high. One can illustrate the weakness of the EMF generated by a PV panel by placing a compass on an operating solar panel and observing that the needle still points north.

While the electricity throughout the majority of a solar site is DC electricity, the inverters convert this DC electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity matching the 60 Hz frequency of the grid. Therefore, the inverters and the wires delivering this power to the grid are producing non-stationary EMF, known as extremely low frequency (ELF) EMF, normally oscillating with a frequency of 60 Hz. This frequency is at the low-energy end of the electromagnetic spectrum. Therefore, it has less energy than

other commonly encountered types of non-ionizing radiation like radio waves, infrared radiation, and visible light.

The wide use of electricity results in background levels of ELF EMFs in nearly all locations where people spend time – homes, workplaces, schools, cars, the supermarket, etc. A person’s average exposure depends upon the sources they encounter, how close they are to them, and the amount of time they spend there.⁶⁸ As stated above, the average exposure to magnetic fields in the U.S. is estimated to be around one mG or 0.1 μ T, but can vary considerably depending on a person’s exposure to EMF from electrical devices and wiring.⁶⁹ At times we are often exposed to much higher ELF magnetic fields, for example when standing three feet from a refrigerator the ELF magnetic field is 6 mG and when standing three feet from a microwave oven the field is about 50 mG.⁷⁰ The strength of these fields diminish quickly with distance from the source, but when surrounded by electricity in our homes and other buildings moving away from one source moves you closer to another. However, unless you are inside of the fence at a utility-scale solar facility or electrical substation it is impossible to get very close to the EMF sources. Because of this, EMF levels at the fence of electrical substations containing high voltages and currents are considered “generally negligible”.^{71, 72}

The strength of ELF-EMF present at the perimeter of a solar facility or near a PV system in a commercial or residential building is significantly lower than the typical American’s average EMF exposure.^{73,74} Researchers in Massachusetts measured magnetic fields at PV projects and found the magnetic fields dropped to very low levels of 0.5 mG or less, and in many cases to less than background levels (0.2 mG), at distances of no more than nine feet from the residential inverters and 150 feet from the utility-scale inverters.⁷⁵ Even when measured within a few feet of the utility-scale inverter, the ELF magnetic fields were well below the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection’s recommended magnetic field level exposure limit for the general public of 2,000 mG.⁷⁶ It is typical that utility scale designs locate large inverters central to the PV panels that feed them because this minimizes the length of wire required and shields neighbors from the sound of the inverter’s cooling fans. Thus, it is rare for a large PV inverter to be within 150 feet of the project’s security fence.

Anyone relying on a medical device such as pacemaker or other implanted device to maintain proper heart rhythm may have concern about the potential for a solar project to interfere with the operation of his or her device. However, there is no reason for concern because the EMF outside of the solar facility’s fence is less than 1/1000 of the level at which manufacturers test for ELF EMF interference, which is 1,000 mG.⁷⁷ Manufacturers of potentially affected implanted devices often provide advice on electromagnetic interference that includes avoiding letting the implanted device get too close to certain sources of fields such as some household appliances, some walkie-talkies, and similar transmitting devices. Some manufacturers’ literature does not mention high-voltage power lines, some say that exposure in public areas should not give interference, and some advise not spending extended periods of time close to power lines.⁷⁸

3. Electric Shock and Arc Flash Hazards

There is a real danger of electric shock to anyone entering any of the electrical cabinets such as combiner boxes, disconnect switches, inverters, or transformers; or otherwise coming in contact with voltages over 50 Volts.⁷⁹ Another electrical hazard is an arc flash, which is an explosion of energy that can occur in a short circuit situation. This explosive release of energy causes a flash of heat and a shockwave, both of which can cause serious injury or death. Properly trained and equipped technicians and electricians know how to safely install, test, and repair PV systems, but there is always some risk of

injury when hazardous voltages and/or currents are present. Untrained individuals should not attempt to inspect, test, or repair any aspect of a PV system due to the potential for injury or death due to electric shock and arc flash, The National Electric Code (NEC) requires appropriate levels of warning signs on all electrical components based on the level of danger determined by the voltages and current potentials. The national electric code also requires the site to be secured from unauthorized visitors with either a six-foot chain link fence with three strands of barbed wire or an eight-foot fence, both with adequate hazard warning signs.

4. Fire Safety

The possibility of fires resulting from or intensified by PV systems may trigger concern among the general public as well as among firefighters. However, concern over solar fire hazards should be limited because only a small portion of materials in the panels are flammable, and those components cannot self-support a significant fire. Flammable components of PV panels include the thin layers of polymer encapsulates surrounding the PV cells, polymer backsheets (framed panels only), plastic junction boxes on rear of panel, and insulation on wiring. The rest of the panel is composed of non-flammable components, notably including one or two layers of protective glass that make up over three quarters of the panel's weight.

Heat from a small flame is not adequate to ignite a PV panel, but heat from a more intense fire or energy from an electrical fault can ignite a PV panel.⁸⁰ One real-world example of this occurred during July 2015 in an arid area of California. Three acres of grass under a thin film PV facility burned without igniting the panels mounted on fixed-tilt racks just above the grass.⁸¹ While it is possible for electrical faults in PV systems on homes or commercial buildings to start a fire, this is extremely rare.⁸² Improving understanding of the PV-specific risks, safer system designs, and updated fire-related codes and standards will continue to reduce the risk of fire caused by PV systems.

PV systems on buildings can affect firefighters in two primary ways, 1) impact their methods of fighting the fire, and 2) pose safety hazard to the firefighters. One of the most important techniques that firefighters use to suppress fire is ventilation of a building's roof. This technique allows superheated toxic gases to quickly exit the building. By doing so, the firefighters gain easier and safer access to the building, Ventilation of the roof also makes the challenge of putting out the fire easier. However, the placement of rooftop PV panels may interfere with ventilating the roof by limiting access to desired venting locations.

New solar-specific building code requirements are working to minimize these concerns. Also, the latest National Electric Code has added requirements that make it easier for first responders to safely and effectively turn off a PV system. Concern for firefighting a building with PV can be reduced with proper fire fighter training, system design, and installation. Numerous organizations have studied fire fighter safety related to PV. Many organizations have published valuable guides and training programs. Some notable examples are listed below.

- The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and International Renewable Energy Council (IREC) partnered to create an online training course that is far beyond the PowerPoint click-and-view model. The self-paced online course, "Solar PV Safety for Fire Fighters," features rich video content and simulated environments so fire fighters can practice the knowledge they've learned. www.iaff.org/pvsafetytraining
- [Photovoltaic Systems and the Fire Code](#): Office of NC Fire Marshal
- [Fire Service Training](#), Underwriter's Laboratory

- Firefighter Safety and Response for Solar Power Systems, National Fire Protection Research Foundation
- Bridging the Gap: Fire Safety & Green Buildings, National Association of State Fire Marshalls
- Guidelines for Fire Safety Elements of Solar Photovoltaic Systems, Orange County Fire Chiefs Association
- Solar Photovoltaic Installation Guidelines, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, Office of the State Fire Marshall
- PV Safety & Firefighting, Matthew Paiss, Homepower Magazine
- PV Safety and Code Development: Matthew Paiss, Cooperative Research Network

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to address and alleviate concerns of public health and safety for utility-scale solar PV projects. Concerns of public health and safety were divided and discussed in the four following sections: (1) Toxicity, (2) Electromagnetic Fields, (3) Electric Shock and Arc Flash, and (4) Fire. In each of these sections, the negative health and safety impacts of utility-scale PV development were shown to be negligible, while the public health and safety benefits of installing these facilities are significant and far outweigh any negative impacts.

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Published by the N.C. Clean Energy Technology Center at N.C. State University





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Turkey Creek Solar Fact Sheet

Turkey Creek Solar is a new proposed solar energy facility planned to the West of Kentucky State Road 39, outside of Lancaster, KY. This 50MW facility will generate enough electricity to power approximately 12,500 homes.

The solar technology used is photovoltaic, and the solar panels sit on racks that are up to 15 feet tall that rotate once per day on a North-South axis to track the sun throughout the day. There is no noise or emissions from the panels or the tracking system. The solar farm will be set back from property lines and a dense vegetative buffer will screen the facility from sight. The footprint of the facility is approximately 320 acres. Grass will be maintained under the panels with minimal amounts of concrete or gravel used throughout the facility.

The solar farm will pay significant county taxes over the course of the project lifetime, with little to no expenditure from the county. The project will generate hundreds of construction jobs for approximately 1 year, as well as a handful of long-term maintenance and landscaping positions. The solar farm will not impact local electricity rates.

Turkey Creek Solar will include a strip of native pollinator plantings in sections of the vegetative buffer. Info on the positive impacts of pollinators on nearby agricultural land will be available at the meeting.

Real estate appraisers have completed many matched-pair analyses on homes adjacent to solar farms. These matched-pair analyses compare the value of homes before and after the construction of a solar farm, and show that the construction of a solar farm has no discernable impact on the sales price of surrounding homes. A professional report from a Kentucky licensed appraiser detailing this analysis for Turkey Creek Solar will be available at the meetings, and copies are available on request.



Exhibit A

REGENERATIVE ENERGY™ IS SILICON RANCH'S HOLISTIC APPROACH TO UTILITY-SCALE POWER PLANT DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, AND OPERATIONS

We're establishing the solar industry's best management practices for how solar power plants interact with the local environment and communities where they're sited.

Each of our projects complies with local regulations on screening requirements, vegetation management, and erosion control.

We build customized, holistic, long-term vegetation management strategies based on each site's unique environmental conditions. These typically consist of an integrated management approach to meet the solar industry's vegetation management performance specifications.

THE REGENERATIVE ENERGY™ STORY

Regenerative Energy™ came to be thanks to people committed to being good neighbors. Good neighbors to people and to natural resources, locally and globally.

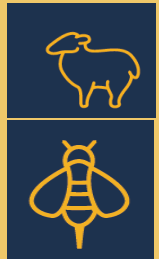
When regenerative rancher Will Harris of White Oak Pastures learned that Silicon Ranch would be building a solar farm next to his family farm in Bluffton, Georgia, he invited his new neighbors to visit. And during the visit, Will and the company's CEO discussed a novel concept: Will could use regenerative farming practices, including managed grazing of sheep, to holistically manage the vegetation on Silicon Ranch's solar farm and keep the land in agricultural production.

And so, Regenerative Energy™ was born -- a new, outcome-driven standard of excellence for the solar industry that harnesses the power of the sun and the power of regenerative agriculture to deliver clean solar electricity and much more: healthy soil and food, increased biodiversity, and revitalized rural communities. Now, Silicon Ranch is working to partner with regenerative ranchers and local farmers across the country to deliver Regenerative Energy™ on its solar farms.

REGENERATIVE ENERGY™ IN LANCASTER

Silicon Ranch’s intent in Lancaster is to have our regenerative farmer partner deploy holistic farming practices on our land and train local farmers to help work the land.

- Grow forage for grazing animals and restore native grasslands
- Manage grazing animals holistically
- Provide pollinator habitat for bees and butterflies
- Provide wildlife environment
- Fertilize using exclusively waste from animals



Regenerative Energy™ is a beautiful sight and it means good things for Lancaster.

- Land under panels producing food instead of idle – local food available for local restaurants
- Job training and jobs for local farmers
- Education and volunteer opportunities for students and other community members
- Stronger economy
- Healthy biologically active soil
- Improved water and air quality
- More resilient ecosystems
- Carbon from the atmosphere trapped in soil
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Good community public relations to attract new businesses



Regenerative Energy™
Everything is connected.



WHAT IS REGENERATIVE ENERGY™?

Regenerative Energy™ is a verified, third-party certified product that combines clean electricity generation with [carbon sequestration](#), ecosystem restoration, and rural revitalization. A transformative new standard of excellence for the solar industry, Regenerative Energy™ aims to improve the way the solar industry manages land by normalizing [regenerative agriculture practices](#) on solar farm sites.

To deliver Regenerative Energy™, Silicon Ranch partners with renowned regenerative ranchers and local farmers, who deploy holistic farming practices on solar farms across the country.

Under these practices, adaptively-managed grazing animals, diverse native plants, pollinator habitat, and wildlife work together to revitalize degraded soils, enhance biodiversity and make ecosystems more resilient, improve watersheds, sequester carbon in the soil, and strengthen rural economies.

Regenerative Energy™ is verified and certified by independent, trusted third-party entities using science-based, globally compliant standards developed through Silicon Ranch's partnership with non-profit organization [Restore the Earth Foundation](#).

WHY REGENERATIVE ENERGY™?

We offer Regenerative Energy™ because it's the right thing for the world: clean electricity and a [nature-based solution](#) to climate change that will positively impact million acres of land and ecosystems over time and help meet the [food demands of the future](#). Regenerative Energy™ keeps land in agricultural production—maximizing soil health and carbon storage—while building rural resilience and regenerative agriculture adoption. The myriad quantifiable beneficial outcomes that Regenerative Energy™ offers will vary by project and local conditions:



Sequestered carbon



Improved water quality



Increased biodiversity



Improved air quality



Established pollinator habitat



Improved animal and human health



Local job creation



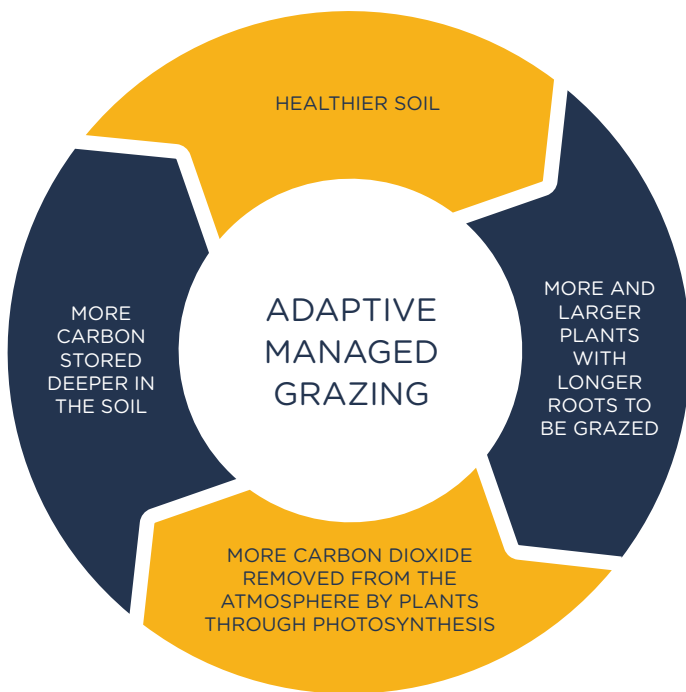
Generational equity and community resiliency

HOW DOES REGENERATIVE ENERGY™ REMOVE AND STORE CARBON?

Regenerative Energy™ leverages animal impact and the power of photosynthesis in plants to maximize removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and its storage and long-term retention in the soils on solar land.

ANIMAL IMPACT

Regenerative Energy™ restores functioning grassland ecosystems using adaptive managed grazing of livestock, which can include sheep, cattle, and poultry. As the livestock graze, they trample manure, urine, and old plant matter into the earth. The plant matter decomposes, and together with the manure and urine, it fertilizes and rejuvenates the soil. By controlling the timing, intensity, and frequency of grazing events to mimic the natural relationship between native grasslands and large herds of grazing animals, managed grazing improves soil health and increases the cycling of nutrients, carbon, water and energy.



PHOTOSYNTHESIS AND CARBON REMOVAL

Adaptive managed grazing stimulates and improves growth of perennial grasses with extensive root systems. Through photosynthesis, these grasses and other plants found in the grassland remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, convert it to sugars, and store it in plant leaves, stems, and root systems.

CARBON STORAGE AND RETENTION

After grazing, some of the below-ground roots die back, allowing new leaves aboveground to grow and continue photosynthesizing. These roots decompose deep in the soil, where some of their carbon content is stored long-term. While the amount of carbon stored in the soil fluctuates daily, seasonally, and annually, research shows that proper grassland management through managed grazing can increase long-term carbon storage and retention in soils.

We invite you to partner with us in this holistic, inclusive, outcomes-based endeavor.

Contact the Regenerative Energy™ team at Silicon Ranch today.

regenerativeenergy.org | 615-577-4786 | info@siliconranchcorp.com



Exhibit A

SOLAR FARM: Turkey Creek Solar
 SITE ADDRESS: Garrard County, KY
 PREPARED FOR: Carolina Solar Energy
 PROJECT NUMBER: 115025.16
 DATE: 3-Dec-19



**Ballentine
 Associates, P.A.**

221 Providence Road
 Chapel Hill, NC 27514
 (919) 929-0481

PRELIMINARY OPINION OF PROBABLE COST FOR SOLAR FARM DECOMMISSIONING

Assumptions: System Size Conversion Factor: 10
 50.0 MW AC
 -- Tracker Racking 65 MW DC
 -- Poly Modules 400 W 1.30 DC/AC Ratio
 -- Dual Inverters
 Summary:

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	SALVAGE UNIT COST	TOTAL SALVAGE VALUE	REMOVAL UNIT COST	TOTAL COST TO REMOVE/RESTORE	NET GAIN/LOSS	COMMENTS
Wire (Copper)	396,683	LB	\$2.66	\$1,053,504.30	\$0.20	\$79,336.52	\$974,167.78	See Note 1
Wire (Aluminum)	10,879	LB	\$0.81	\$8,828.39	\$0.20	\$2,175.88	\$6,652.51	See Note 1
Racking System	7,561,000	LB	\$0.13	\$956,862.86	\$0.08	\$604,880.00	\$351,982.86	See Note 2
Solar Modules (Crystalline)	162,500	EA	\$4.00	\$650,000.00	\$2.00	\$325,000.00	\$325,000.00	See Note 3*
Inverters	20,615	LB of Metal	\$0.91	\$18,684.80	\$2,250.00	\$22,500.00	-\$3,815.20	See Note 4
Transformers	25,000	kVA	\$5.00	\$125,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$75,000.00	See Note 5
Concrete Pad	10	EA	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$15,000.00	-\$15,000.00	See Note 6
6' Chain Link Fencing	240,800	LB	\$0.04	\$9,632.00	\$3.50	\$196,000.00	-\$186,368.00	See Note 7
Substation	1	EA	\$17,000.00	\$17,000.00	\$85,000.00	\$85,000.00	-\$68,000.00	See Note 8
Battery Storage System (NOT APPLICABLE)	0	EA	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	See Note 9
Land Restoration	400	AC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$200,000.00	-\$199,500.00	See Note 10
Erosion Control	400	AC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$800,000.00	-\$800,000.00	See Note 11
TOTAL				\$2,839,512.36		\$2,379,892.40	\$460,119.95	

Notes:

1. Wire Excavate to cable depth at one end of trench. Use tractor or other equipment to remove all wiring and conduits in common trench.

	Length	LBS/1000 FT	Total LBS
MV - 1/0 AWG (Copper)	26,600	363.013	9,656
MV - 1/3 (AL)	26,600	409	10,879
AC output (Copper)	66,900	99.181	6,635
DC output (Copper)	5,750,000	66.155	380,391
Total Copper			396,683
Total Aluminium			10,879
Cost to Remove:	\$0.20	per pound	

2. Racking System

Racking frame: Cut legs and cross beams to appropriate size and transport to staging area. Racking Posts: Remove via post-puller and transport to staging area. Haul all removed pieces of racking system to recycle center via flatbed.

Racks:	2300
Posts (10' W6x9) per rack:	13
Total Posts:	29,900
Total post weight (LBS):	2,691,000
Total Racking Weight (LBS):	4,870,000
Total Structure Weight:	7,561,000
Cost to Remove Racking System:	\$0.10 per pound

Exhibit A

3. Solar Modules

Hand remove modules and place on pallets. Transport pallets to Module recycle center. Assumed salvage value for crystalline modules.

Cost to Remove Modules: \$2.00 Per module
 Salvage Value : \$0.01 Per Watt

4. Inverters

Removal by crane onto flatbed with no disassembly. Haul to recycle center.

		Total LBS	\$/LB
Number of Inverters:	10	41,230	
Weight Per Inverter (LBS):	4123		
% Steel:	20%	8,246	\$0.13
% Aluminum:	20%	8,246	\$0.81
% Copper:	10%	4,123	\$2.66
Total:		20,615	\$0.91
Cost to Remove Inverters	\$2,250 Each		

5. Transformers

Removal by crane onto flatbed with no disassembly. Haul to recycle center. Oil removal performed by recycle center.

Total Transformers: 10
 Transformer: 2,500 kVA
 Total kVA: 25,000
 Value: \$5/kVA
 Cost to Remove Transformer: \$5,000

6. Concrete Pad

Assumed (1) 100 SF precast pad per transformer and battery system. Remove precast concrete pad via excavator onto flatbed. Haul to recycle center. Assumed \$45 fee per load at recycle center.

Cost to remove pad: \$1,500

7. Chain Link Fencing

Assumed 1 post per 10 LF. Assumed post weight of 3 lbs. Machine roll fence fabric, remove posts via post-puller. Transport removed fencing materials to recycle center.

Fencing:		Post weight =	16800 lbs
Total LF on Project:	56,000	Fence Weight =	224000 lbs
Total Weight:	240,800 lbs		
Cost to remove fencing:	\$3.50 LF		

8. Substation & Substation Equipment

Remove equipment via crane onto flatbed. Haul to recycle center. Remove substation fencing via fence-roller and remove posts via post-puller. Haul to recycle center. Assumed salvage value.

Cost to Remove: \$85,000
 Salvage Value: 20% of Cost to Remove

9. Battery Storage System

Not applicable

10. Land Restoration

Includes: removal of gravel access drives via skid-steer and haul off site; Re-seeding of disturbed areas via atv drill-seeder at 5lbs per acre, stabilized with

Cost to restore: \$500 Acre

11. Erosion Control

Install perimeter erosion control measures (assumes sediment basins will not be required) before decommissioning begins and remove erosion control measures following decommissioning. Includes erosion control permitting.

Cost : \$2,000 Acre

Exhibit A

Scrap Metal Unit Pricing

NON-FERROUS

Trading summary	Current year summary	Price graph	Average prices	Useful links
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Data valid for 2 December 2019

LME OFFICIAL PRICES, US\$ PER TONNE

CONTRACT	ALUMINIUM ALLOY	ALUMINIUM	COPPER
Cash Buyer	1310.00	1789.00	5855.00

LME ALUMINIUM



LME COPPER



LME STEEL SCRAP

Trading summary	Current year summary	Price graph	Average prices	Contract specs	Monthly overview
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Data valid for 2 December 2019

LME CLOSING PRICES, US\$ PER TONNE

CONTRACT	PRICE
Month 1	279.00

LME STEEL SCRAP



1 Tonne = 2204.62 LBs

Price Conversion:

Metal	\$/LB
Aluminium:	0.81
Copper:	2.66
Steel:	0.13



Community Solar, DER, Utility Scale

Can Solar Energy Save the Bees?

8.13.18



By Greer Russell, Argonne National Laboratory

In response to the population decline of pollinating insects, such as wild bees and monarch butterflies, researchers at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Argonne National Laboratory are investigating ways to use "pollinator-friendly solar power."

By studying solar energy facilities with pollinator habitats on site, researchers hope to rehabilitate pollinator populations that play a crucial role in the national and global agricultural industries. Loss of such species could devastate crop production, costs and nutrition on a global scale.

Though small, insects are at least partially responsible for pollinating nearly 75 percent of all crops world-wide consumed by humans in their daily diet. As man-made environmental stressors – including pesticides and land development – have increased, insect pollinators have lost habitats and species have declined significantly.

However, a team of Argonne researchers has been examining the potential benefits of establishing pollinator habitat at utility-scale solar energy (USSE) facilities to conserve pollinators and restore the ecosystem they provide. Looking at over 2,800 existing and planned USSE facilities in the contiguous United States, researchers in Argonne's Environmental Science (EVS) division have found that the area around solar panels could provide an ideal location for the plants that attract pollinators.

Pollinator Map

Often filled with gravel or turf grass, this land otherwise goes unused. Research has shown that in some locations these grounds offer a perfect place to establish native plant species, such as prairie grass or wildflowers, which are prevalent pollinator habitats, in hopes of encouraging steady population growth.

RENEWABLE ENERGY WORLD



Putting the 'Farm' Back in Solar Farms - Renewable Energy World

Minnesota will be included in a study to help federal researchers test the potential of pollinator-friendly habitat and fruit and vegetable crops around solar arrays. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) will plant vegetation this year at three Minnesota solar installations owned by Enel Green Power.

[Read the article on renewableenergyworld.com >](https://www.renewableenergyworld.com)

Helping to conserve declining pollinator populations, EVS researchers Lee Walston, Heidi Hartmann, Shruti Khadka Mishra and Ihor Hlohowskyj, along with National Renewable Energy Laboratory researchers James McCall and Jordan Macknick believe that growing pollinator habitat around solar sites will also help improve the sustainability of solar energy development in agricultural regions. By increasing the ability of pollinators to pollinate adjacent agricultural fields, solar-sited pollinator habitat may boost farmer's crop yields and make solar farms a more welcome neighbor to agricultural farms.

The researchers examined whether solar-sited pollinator habitat could benefit agriculture in a recent study published in *Environmental Science & Technology*. The study found over 3,500 square kilometers of agricultural land near existing and planned USSE facilities that could benefit. Walston believes this method of rehabilitation could help reinstate the declining pollinator population with few subsequent side effects.

“Solar-sited pollinator habitat can help optimize the land-use efficiency of solar energy developments, while not compromising solar panel efficiency,” he said.

“We’re also looking into whether the high upfront costs for seed mixes and establishing the pollinator habitats will be offset by lower facility maintenance costs,” added Hartmann.

This — along with widening appreciation among community members and local governments for the pollinators’ role in agricultural production — may persuade solar developers to make the switch.

Walston and Hartmann looked at three example crop types to measure the agricultural benefits of increased pollinator habitat. These crops – soybeans, almonds and cranberries – depend on insect pollinators for their annual crop yields. If all existing and planned solar facilities near these crop types included pollinator habitat and increased yield by just one percent, crop values could rise \$1.75 million, \$4 million and \$233,000 for soybeans, almonds and cranberries, respectively.

Walston and Hartmann’s research is the first to quantitatively support agricultural benefits of adding pollinator habitat at solar facilities. Next, said Hartmann, the team will begin fieldwork that measures the type and numbers of native pollinators in areas surrounding USSE facilities.

This study provides even more opportunities for investigating the environmental benefits of pollinator habitat, such as water conservation, land management and carbon dioxide reduction.

With more states recognizing the need to address pollinator population declines through legislation, more solar facilities are making the switch to pollinator-friendly areas. Argonne’s very own state of Illinois recently passed a “Pollinator-Friendly Solar Energy Bill” at the end of May, joining states like Maryland and Minnesota, which have made similar legislative progress toward a more “landscape compatible” future.

The publication is titled [“Examining the Potential for Agricultural Benefits of Pollinator Habitat at Utility-Scale Solar Facilities in the United States.”](#)

The research was funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office within the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

More

