



Bear Creek Solar Project Earns Envision Platinum Award



September 5, 2023 — The Bear Creek Solar Project is a completed 50-megawatt (MW) solar project in Richland County, Wisconsin that produces enough clean, low-cost energy to power approximately 13,000 homes annually. It will now serve as a significant source of new local tax revenue for the town of Buena Vista and Richland County for the duration of its operation.

The [Bear Creek Solar Project](#) is one of Alliant Energy's 12 utility-scale solar projects in Wisconsin. In all, the company expects to add nearly 1,100 MW of solar generation in the state by mid-2024. It's part of the company's transition to a more diversified energy mix that includes adding more clean energy generation, as outlined in its [Clean Energy Blueprint](#). It is the second Alliant Energy project announced this year to receive an award, with the [Wood County Solar Project](#) earning an Envision Platinum award in April.

Alliant Energy contracted Burns & McDonnell of Kansas City, Missouri, to engineer, procure and construct the Bear Creek Solar Project. The Bear Creek Solar Project connects directly to the electrical transmission grid through a local substation. The project scope includes a solar array set on approximately 456 acres, a collector substation and an approximately 0.1-mile, 138-kilovolt overhead transmission line interconnect.

"This Envision Platinum recognition from ISI supports our decision to transition to cleaner energy through projects like the Bear Creek Solar Project," said Barbara Tormaschy, senior vice president of sustainability and regulatory strategy at Alliant Energy. "The sustainable development and construction of renewable projects allows us to create a healthier environment while providing the reliable energy our customers expect."

“Alliant Energy and Burns & McDonnell have delivered another significant source of clean, renewable energy for Wisconsin,” said Kristi Wamstad, ISI verification director. “We applaud the commitment of the project’s leadership and the contributions of all stakeholders who contributed to this achievement.”

The Bear Creek Solar Project’s award comes out of an independent peer-review Envision verification process, overseen by ISI, that assesses the project’s performance across 64 sustainability indicators. These include community, quality of life, management, planning, materials, energy, water, environmental impacts, emissions and resilience. Below are some notable examples of this project’s verified achievements.

VERIFIED RESULTS

Plan for sustainable communities. As with the [Wood County Solar Project](#), the Bear Creek Solar Project helps fill the gap between Wisconsin’s renewable energy goals and its current reliance on fossil fuel energy generation. Taking into account environmental, social and economic considerations, the proposed solar project demonstrated it was superior to the no-build alternative as well as other options to meet the region’s projected energy demand. Detailed assessments also highlight the project’s contributions to the broader community and regional sustainability goals.

Minimizing construction impacts. Project planners developed and implemented comprehensive measures to minimize negative effects on the surrounding community during the approximately 18-month construction period. These policies and measures were informed by due diligence studies and public input, including construction work schedule limitations, designated traffic routes and a proactive roadway maintenance program.

Managing construction waste with sustainability in mind. The project team implemented procedures to ensure nearly all construction and demolition material was diverted from landfill disposal. These materials were closely tracked, and the project team showed that 97.4% was either sent to recycling facilities or diverted for beneficial reuse.



Reducing air pollution emissions. The project owner, Alliant Energy, has demonstrated a company-wide commitment to reduce air emissions from its portfolio of assets and improve ambient air quality. Bear Creek is part of a portfolio of solar projects that will collectively replace existing fossil fuel-fired generation sources. Analyses show the project will result in a significant reduction of air pollutant emissions compared to air emissions that may occur without the project.

Supporting a renewable energy transition. As a utility-scale solar photovoltaic energy generation facility, this project will generate a net positive amount of renewable energy throughout its 30-year operational life. The project team forecasts the site will generate approximately 104,444 MWh in its first year of operation.

Protecting wetlands and sites of high ecological value. Using insights from detailed environmental studies, the project team identified and fully avoided disruption to sites of high ecological value. In addition, the design includes a buffer zone necessary to protect an adjacent wetland and surface waters from project-related construction activities. The approximately 200-foot buffer zone established between the wetland and the project's limits of disturbance increases a zone of natural growth around the wetland that had previously been used for agricultural activity.

The project team planted the site with native mixed seed and pollinator refuge seed that will increase habitat for multiple threatened and endangered species identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This improvement is also expected to positively affect the ecological health of the watershed as the grass matures in coming years.

Project Details At-a-Glance

Envision-verified project:	Bear Creek Solar Project
Location:	Town of Buena Vista, Wisconsin
Lead Envision Firm:	Burns & McDonnell
Envision Rating:	Platinum
Award Date:	September 5, 2023
Project Owner(s):	Alliant Energy
Project Partners	Burns & McDonnell
Project Phase:	Operational; completed in fall 2022
Total Cost of Project	\$64.7M
Project Delivery Method:	Engineer, Procure, Construct
For more information:	Visit the project website