ELK CREEK SOLAR

THE STATE OF SOLAR TODAY

Elk Creek Solar is excited for the opportunity to bring solar energy to Dunn County. In this edition of the Elk Creek Solar Newsletter, we are pleased to provide an overview of what solar energy currently looks like across the continental United States, Wisconsin, and Dunn County.

STATE OF SOLAR ACROSS THE CONTINENTAL U.S.

Renewable energy is taking off across the U.S., with solar and wind power projected to make up 16% of the country's total energy generation in 2023, which is 2% more than last year and has doubled since contributing 8% in 2018.[1] In 2022, half of all new electric capacity added to the power grid came from solar. While a decade ago only three states had one gigawatt or more of installed solar, now, half of U.S states do. This growth in solar energy is partly due to rapidly declining cost of installation, which has allowed the industry to expand into new markets, and because many states and corporations are looking to diversify their power generation mix.

Over the next five years, the solar industry in the U.S. is expected to install more capacity than has been installed to date, with an additional 200 gigawatts.[2] The U.S. isn't alone in choosing renewables. Globally, the International Energy Agency forecasts an 85% acceleration in renewable capacity expansion from the previous five years. Between 2022-2027, global renewables are forecasted to grow by almost 2,400 gigawatts.[3]

STATE OF SOLAR IN WISCONSIN

Wisconsin currently ranks 23rd in the nation for total installed solar capacity with 1,205 megawatts installed. As of the end of 2022, only 1.71% of the state's electricity comes from solar.[4] The growth projection over the next five years includes 4,435 megawatts, nearly quadrupling what is currently installed.[5]

In Wisconsin, there are 6 solar projects over 50 MW that are currently generating utility-scale electricity, with 23 more that are either in development or recently approved.[6] Most of these projects are developed by private companies, but so far, all solar farms built or proposed in Wisconsin are owned by, or sell their electricity to, Wisconsin electric providers. Wisconsin utilities are also seeking to diversify their power generation portfolios, and purchase projects like these to serve their customers.

Economically, the expansion in renewable energy is just as important. Over 70% of Wisconsin's energy comes from coal and natural gas[7], and with no coal or natural gas reserves in the state, over a billion dollars is spent each year to import the resources needed to power these plants. Luckily, the cost of solar projects has dropped by over 75% in the past decade, during which time the technology has improved. Now, even a seasonal state like Wisconsin can be a perfectly viable place for solar energy. Producing solar power locally, rather than importing or procuring resources for conventional power generation, keeps more money in our state and allows our local communities to prosper.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT LOCAL EVENTS

Elk Creek Solar has had the pleasure of partnering with several local organizations to sponsor and host events throughout the county. Listed below are a few events which the project has engaged with in the community, and we look forward to building more relationships throughout the lifetime of the project.

APRIL 2023:

- Signed Community Fund with Elk Mound School District
- Signed Joint Agreement (JA) with the Town of Spring Brook and Dunn County
- Dunn County Sheriff's Office
- Dunn County Historical Society

MAY 2023:

- Dunn County Veterans Services

STATE OF SOLAR IN DUNN COUNTY, WI

Today 5 counties in Wisconsin already benefit from the revenue generated by operating solar farms over 50MW. With multiple new projects in development, 15 more counties could potentially benefit from local large-scale solar generation, including Dunn County. The Elk Creek Solar Project[8] is a 300-megawatt solar photovoltaic and battery energy storage project, planned on approximately 2,000 acres of private land in the Town of Spring Brook in Dunn County, WI. The proposed project is being developed by Tyr Energy Development (TED) Renewables, LLC., and once operational, is expected to supply enough energy to the local grid to power approximately 60,000 homes. That's enough electricity to supply the entire population of Dunn County with clean, renewable energy.[9]

Other existing solar projects in Dunn County include the SunDEC Community Solar Project, located in the Town of Dunn[10]. SunDEC is Dunn Energy Cooperative's 100kW community solar array that went into operation in February of 2017 and is currently being managed by Dunn Energy Cooperative. The array is located southeast of Menomonie on 370th Ave, on the same site as the Dairyland Power Cooperative's 1 Megawatt solar array. The Dunn County Historical Society has plans for their own solar project, a Solar Victory Garden[11]. The exciting new initiative will consist of ground-mounted solar arrays installed at the Dunn County Historical Society's Rassbach Museum located in Menomonie's Wakanda Park. The exhibit will produce enough electricity through most of the year to power the museum facilities and is estimated to save the Society $200,000 in energy costs over the next 25 years.

With more solar on the horizon, there is a lot of excitement for Dunn County. All of these solar initiatives will help contribute to the Menomonie City Council's resolution to join state, county and local agencies to ensure all electricity generated in the state is carbon-free by 2050. We're excited to welcome more solar to Dunn County!

[1] https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=55239
[2] https://www.seia.org/solar-industry-research-data
[3] https://www.iea.org/reports/renewables-2022/executive-summary
[4] https://www.seia.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Wisconsin.pdf
[5] https://www.seia.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Wisconsin.pdf
[6] https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERFview/viewdoc.aspx?docid=462034
[7] https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=WI
[8] https://www.elkcreeksolarproject.com/
[9] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/dunncountywisconsin/PST045221
[10] https://www.dunnenergy.com/renewable-energy
[11] https://www.dunnhistory.org/solar-victory-garden

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