Facilities & Services
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Solar Farm FAQs

FAQs

Why is the University planning a Solar Farm?
This project will increase the use of renewable sources of energy for campus electrical needs and help meet the commitments set by the University of Illinois 2010 Climate Action Plan (iCAP).

How much will this cost the University?
The total cost of the project won't be determined until a vendor is selected from the RFP.

How much electricity will this produce?
Depending on the efficiency of the panels and the site layout, this development would have the potential to produce 3MW to 10MW. This solar energy farm would produce 1.219% to 4.064% of campus electricity.

Are there any risks or dangers living near a solar farm?
There are no known risks. Solar photovoltaic (PV) is one of the least intrusive and cleanest forms of power generation available. There will be little traffic to the site.

What will the solar farm look like?
The design of the farm won't be known until we get responses to the RFP. The exact placement, style and size of the PV panels will depend on the firm chosen, but as soon as a mock-up of the site becomes available, it will be shared.

How tall will the solar panels be?
Solar PV panels are typically between 6 to 12 feet above ground, and are generally unobtrusive on the landscape. For comparison, depending on the variety, corn can be anywhere from 4 feet to 12 feet tall.

How reflective are the panels? Will they produce a glare?
They should not be reflective. Solar PV panels are specifically engineered to absorb light rather than reflect it because reflected light results in lost energy output. Panels are dark in color and include an absorptive coating that enables the panels to absorb as much of the available light spectrum as possible.

Will the solar panels increase the temperature around the site?
No they will not. Although the panels will be warm to the touch, they will not noticeably affect the temperature of the surrounding area; temperatures under the panels will be typical of the ambient temperatures in any shaded location.

Will the solar panels move?
The proposed solar PV array will either be fixed-tilt, where each panel row is fixed in place on a steel frame, or built on a single drive arm that moves the panel a fraction of a degree every 15 minutes to enable the panel rows to follow the path of the sun from east to west throughout the course of the day.

Will there be an increase in noise?
Once installed, the only sound from the farm resonates from the power conditioning equipment and electrical transformers. This equipment emitts a "humming sound" at very low levels, no greater than the transformers dispersed throughout a residential neighborhood that transform higher voltage power from transmission and distribution lines to lower voltages safe for use in homes and businesses.

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Question and Answers Cont.

Will there be trucks accessing the property?
There will only be increased truck traffic during the period of construction.

How long will construction last?
The construction of the solar array would begin no sooner than Fall 2012, and is anticipated to last approximately 6-8 months.

Can I still access the pond for fishing, etc?
The pond will still be completetly accessible to the public along the full perimeter for recreational purposes such as fishing. Additionally, the land Northeast of the pond by the corner of Windsor Road and First Street will not be impacted by the solar farm.

What measures will be taken to protect the herons and other wildlife that visit or live on the property?
The University will submit an Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool (ECOCAT) review request through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, which will give recommendations on best methods to protect native and migratory species on the property, including birds and animals. As always, the University will comply with all state and federal laws.

Who will use power from the solar farm?
All of the electricity generated by the solar farm will be used by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. The University also will own/receive any and all current/or future Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and emmissions credits associated with the energy from this project.

Contact Information:
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