

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING POSSIBLE SITES FOR LOCAL UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

November 9, 2016
(Updated July 17, 2017)

Introduction

The Redwood Coast Energy Authority (“RCEA”) is issuing this Request for Information (“RFI”) to solicit responses from public and private land owners in or around Humboldt County regarding potential sites that could be leased or purchased for the development of utility-scale solar energy projects. This RFI is intended solely to obtain information to assist RCEA with the ongoing assessment of possible project sites as well as further analysis of financial viability of developing local solar projects.

This RFI is an inquiry only. **This RFI is not a contract or agreement nor does it represent a commitment to negotiate with any land owner, issue a Request for Qualifications, or issue a Request for Proposals in the future.** Those choosing to respond to this RFI will not, merely by virtue of submitting such a response, be deemed to be “bidders” on any future projects in any sense, and no such respondent will have any preference, special designation, advantage or disadvantage whatsoever in any subsequent activities related to any future projects. The information contained in the responses to this RFI will, however, help RCEA to advance evaluation and development efforts for local utility-scale solar, which may result in the launch of a formal project and associated negotiations and procurement activities.

Background

RCEA is currently working to establish a community choice energy program for Humboldt County. Community choice energy, also known as community choice aggregation, is a provision of California law that allows cities, counties or joint powers agencies to purchase electricity and other necessary electrical services on behalf of the customers in their territories. Community choice programs differ from municipal utility districts in that they only provide the generation component of electricity services, which accounts for around half of a customer’s electricity bill. The investor-owned utility, in our case Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), continues to own the electricity distribution infrastructure and to provide electricity transmission, distribution, billing, and related customer services. However, community choice programs are able to determine their own energy supply mixes and rate structures.

A central objective of RCEA’s community choice energy strategy is to maximize the use of local renewable energy. In pursuit of this objective, RCEA intends to support a range of energy-generation options, including solar energy. This would include both small-scale distributed solar energy systems on customers’ homes and businesses—primarily designed to meet on-site energy demands—as well as medium to large “utility-scale” solar projects that are designed to primarily to deliver wholesale power onto the grid. This RFI is intended to assist RCEA in identifying and evaluating possible local sites suitable for medium to large utility-scale solar projects which could be developed by RCEA and/or a third party.

Desired Site Characteristic and Information Requested

RCEA has identified site characteristics that could make a project desirable for solar development. The characteristics include but are not limited to:

1. Available open space to accommodate 0.5 MW of solar or more – approximately 3 acres or larger.
2. Located within Humboldt County, or potentially nearby in adjacent Counties (Del Norte, Trinity, Mendocino, or Siskiyou).
3. Flat or gently sloped with good southern and/or western exposure.
4. Accessible by vehicle.
5. Close to electrical transmission or distribution infrastructure, ideally an existing substation.
6. Appropriately zoned for energy generation project development.
7. Ideally vacant and/or underutilized land with limited other economic value or potential uses.
8. Lacking any potential impediments to timely development and/or incompatible constraints, such as: ecological or cultural sensitivity, limitations based on neighboring properties, high agricultural or other economic value.

Interested landowners are asked to address the above considerations in their responses and provide information that includes:

1. Respondent/property owner's name and contact information (phone, email, and mailing address).
2. Specific location of the property and size of the area available for potential solar development.
3. Current property zoning and any known use restrictions.
4. Physical description of the site (existing conditions, slope, exposure, access, etc).
5. Information, if available, on nearby electric transmission and distribution infrastructure.
6. Any known potential constraints on development, such as ecological sensitivity.
7. Any other factors, advantages, or limitations that might be relevant to the viability of the site for solar energy development.
8. Desired lease or sale value, if that is already known.

Responses should be directed via email to Lori Biondini, Director of Business Development and Planning, at lbiondini@redwoodenergy.org.

Responses will be accepted on an on-going basis through 2018; this period may be extended by RCEA at its sole discretion. Responses should include the phrase "RCEA RFI - Solar Energy Sites" clearly indicated in the subject line of the e-mail accompanying the response.

Upon receiving a response, RCEA will initiate a review and may contact the respondents to follow up with additional questions and clarifications or to offer to conduct one-on-one meetings with some or all of the respondents. The opportunity to participate in such meetings, if any, will be communicated separately to individual respondents.

Public Nature of Responses

All responses to this RFI, including responses, pre-submittal and post-submittal communications with RCEA, will become the exclusive property of RCEA. Responses and communications with RCEA are subject to disclosure in accordance with the California Public Records Act (Cal. Government Code section 6250 et seq.). Respondents should not submit any information or documents that they consider proprietary and that they would not want publicly disclosed.

If there is information you wish to provide that you believe would be critically important to the evaluation of the site and that you believe would be exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act, prior to submitting any such information you should contact RCEA to discuss and evaluate the matter further.

By submitting a response, respondent agree to hold harmless and not seek damages against RCEA, its officers, employees and agents, or any member government or recovery of its attorneys' fees as a result of any dispute related to the release or withholding of information submitted in response to this RFI.

Participant Feedback

RCEA welcomes feedback on the process of developing local solar projects. Please ask any questions that you or your organization deem relevant. Thank you in advance for your participation.

All communications, questions, and responses associated with this RFI should be addressed to:

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