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Approval of Solar Farms Shows Solar is Good for Our Communities, Wisconsin, and Ratepayers

Madison, WI -- On Thursday, the Wisconsin Public Service Commission approved the acquisition of the biggest solar farm in the Midwest by Madison Gas & Electric and Wisconsin Public Service, of Green Bay, a subsidiary of WEC Energy Group. The utilities acquired 150-megawatts from the massive solar installation at Badger Hollow in central Wisconsin, which covers about 3,500 acres of Iowa County farmland, and 150-megawatts from the Two Creeks Solar Project in Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties. The utilities expect to produce 300-megawatts from 1.2 million solar panels by 2023. On Wednesday, the Richland County Board of Zoning unanimously approved a 49.9 megawatt Richland County Solar Project developed by Savion Energy to be located in the Town of Buena Vista.

“Solar is good for our communities, it’s good for Wisconsin, it’s good for the planet, and the PSC decision demonstrates it’s good for our utilities,” stated Elizabeth Ward, Program Director for the Sierra Club’s Wisconsin Chapter, **“these solar projects mean clean energy jobs, the ability to get off of fossil-fuel power faster, and it means better electricity rates.”**

The state of Wisconsin currently lags behind its neighbors on renewable energy use, but these projects will catapult the state up. The application by MGE and WEC recognized that solar power is cost competitive. The utilities compared solar farm acquisition to the investment and construction of new gas plants and found, in every model, that solar power was overwhelming the smarter financial option.

These projects will also mean a lot of benefits for local communities. Abbie Lehman, a resident in the area, responded to the news about the Badger Hollow approval with excitement, **“As a local resident who grew up here, I am so proud to see more renewable energy development in our area. As more frequent flooding and drought continues to affect our local farmers and their crops, it is becoming clearer every day that we must do our part to mitigate climate change. Many people supported, coordinated and worked together to get this operation passed, and today their hard work paid off.”**

For Richland County, the solar project demonstrates a positive step forward on the urgent need to combat climate-change. Sheri Scott, a resident of Richland Center stated, **“I’m so pleased that Richland County, which has begun to see the effects of climate change right here where we have had such dramatic flooding, has stepped up to be part of the solution. Generating electricity from solar here in Richland County will contribute to the goal of reducing our dependence on expensive imported fuels.”**

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The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. In Wisconsin, the Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter’s 18,000 members work to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin.