

# FLAT CREEK SOLAR PROJECT

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What impact will the Flat Creek solar project have on neighboring property values?

Multiple property value studies from across the country have demonstrated that proximity to large-scale solar projects (a) does not measurably affect property values, and (b) does not impair the sale of agricultural or residential land near the project. In some instances, property values may be influenced, positively or negatively, by a particular project setting, the use of the land prior to the introduction of the project, and other factors, including the long-term tax revenue and employment opportunities created by the project for the local community.

### 2. What are the panels made of? Do they contain cadmium?

Solar panels typically consist of tempered glass, aluminum, copper, silver, and semiconductor materials, all of which are common materials found in almost all of our households and vehicles already, and which are safe under all normal conditions. The panels are enclosed with glass and an aluminum frame and then tightly sealed. We are not aware of any instances where chemicals were released from any solar panels into the environment. With respect to cadmium, crystalline silicon PV panels, which are heavily used in the industry (90% of all solar panels) do not contain cadmium and pose no material risk of toxicity to public health and safety.

### 3. How much wear and tear can the panels take?

Solar panel racking and anchoring systems are built to withstand high-force winds. Flexible racking systems operate like a chain link fence under duress, bending with the wind rather than staying rigid and breaking. With respect to hail and wind, solar panels are typically tested and certified to withstand hail of up to one inch falling at 50 mph and winds of up to 150 mph.

In addition, we will be exploring adding “stow” protection to the panels we select. Stow protection allows the panels to move to either a horizontal position in the event of high winds to reduce exposure, or to a vertical position in the event of a hailstorm to minimize potential damage.

The panels are designed for decades of corrosion-free operation, as they are encapsulated between two layers of transparent plastic to prevent exposure to the ambient air and moisture. These encapsulation layers are further protected with a layer of tempered glass on the front and a polymer sheet on the back. This same material has been used for decades between layers of tempered glass to give car windshields and hurricane windows their great strength, allowing them to stay intact, even under extreme conditions.

### 4. How will the Flat Creek solar project affect prime farmland?

The Flat Creek project will have minimal impact (less than 1%) on prime farmland in Montgomery County. While the County holds approximately 40,000 acres of prime farmland soils (as defined by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, or NYSDAM, as soils having a mineral soil group (MSG) ranking between 1 and 4 [MSG1-4]), only 204 acres of the Flat Creek project resides on such soil. The construction, restoration, and decommissioning of the Flat Creek project will be conducted in accordance with NYSDAM’s “Guidelines for Solar Energy Projects – Construction Mitigation for Agricultural Lands” to mitigate construction impacts.

### 5. How will stormwater discharge be handled?

The project will have a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which will provide for sediment and erosion controls to manage the volume and composition of any stormwater discharged from the project site. There are no anticipated stormwater runoff issues for land hosting or adjacent to panel areas.

## **6. How do solar projects affect agricultural activities?**

Unlike other forms of development, the temporary conversion of agricultural land for use as a solar project site prevents more impactful development from occurring, preserving the land for agricultural use in the future.

Solar projects are generally considered to have a low impact to the land. While earth disturbance will occur during construction, once the project is completed the underlying ground will be restored and reseeded in accordance with NYS DAM's guidelines. During the project's lifespan, vegetation can grow under the panels which allows the land to regenerate, retain water and topsoil, and create habitat for local wildlife and native pollinators, which improves the soil health over time. These effects can increase the productivity and value of the land for agriculture once the project is decommissioned.

Further, participation in solar projects is voluntary – farmers and landowners sign up to participate if they think doing so is best for their farms and families. Cordelio coordinates with landowners to site project equipment. If not all land is used for the project, farming may continue on those areas outside of the project area.

## **7. Will groundwater/wells be affected by the Flat Creek solar project?**

The water table within the vicinity of the project will not be negatively affected by the Flat Creek solar project – during either construction or operations. The project equipment is installed at relatively shallow depths – for example:

- Transformer pads: approximately 3 to 4 feet;
- Substation structure foundations: approximately 4 to 6 feet;
- Racking posts: 8 to 12 feet;
- Collection lines: 4 to 5 feet.

Given the shallow placement of project equipment, we do not foresee any impact to groundwater sources. As an added safety measure, we conducted a well survey which was sent to all landowners within 1,000 feet of the project site to identify any wells located within 100 feet of collection lines and access roads, 500 feet of drill locations, and 200 feet of racking post locations. For any active water wells within these distances, Cordelio will engage a qualified third party to conduct potability testing both before and after construction.

## **8. What happens to the panels when they reach the end of their lifespan?**

New York State requires a Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (the "Plan") to be developed and implemented as part of Article VIII of the Public Service Law (formerly known as the "94-c" permitting process). The Plan will outline the ways Cordelio will safely and responsibly remove all solar or solar-related equipment when the project reaches the end of its useful life. The Plan will also detail how the property within the project area will be restored to as close as possible to its pre-facility state to allow for continued agricultural activity after the project is decommissioned. The Plan will also address safety procedures we will follow, the removal of any hazardous waste we may encounter as we build the facility, and how the decommissioning will be funded, along with any recycling needed. The Plan will also outline the potential future uses of the site, and the schedule we will follow in decommissioning the site. In every instance, this project will be planned, built, operated, and decommissioned in accordance with applicable guidelines and permits.

## **9. What financial assurances are in place to ensure clean-up takes place?**

In accordance with the requirements of Article VIII, within one year of project operation, Cordelio will provide the towns of Root and Canajoharie with a financial assurance (such as a letter of credit) to ensure the towns will bear no financial responsibility for decommissioning and restoration. This financial assurance will be reevaluated and adjusted (if needed) every five years and will remain active for the life of the project until decommissioning occurs.

## **10. How is the Flat Creek solar project being funded?**

Cordelio fully funds all project development costs directly. Activities such as signing agreements with landowners, performing site assessments, managing engineers to design the facilities, and navigating the necessary permitting processes are funded during this period.

As the project enters the construction phase, Cordelio will fund all project costs from its own investment, as well as a project loan from established financial institutions. During operations, the revenue from the sale of electricity pays for day-to-day operation and maintenance activities.

## **11. What impacts will the Flat Creek solar project have on threatened and endangered species?**

For any species identified in New York as threatened, endangered, or of special concern, surveys have been conducted in accordance with state and federal protocols. These surveys assess whether the construction and operation of the Flat Creek solar project will affect New York listed species.

Cordelio prepared and submitted a Wildlife Site Characterization Report to the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and Electrical Transmission (“ORES”) in accordance with the requirements of Article VIII. This report details the results of protected species surveys within the project area. As part of the Article VIII process, the project will prepare a Net Conservation Benefit Plan which will describe the project’s mitigation measures designed to offset any potential impacts to species that may occur in the project area (anticipated to be minimal). These documents, when available, can be reviewed on the ORES document management website:

<https://orespermits.ny.gov/Public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterSeq=64978&MNO=23-00054>