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SOLAR

NV Energy Announces ‘Hulkingly Big’ Solar-Plus-Storage Procurement

Berkshire Hathaway’s Nevada utility announced three new projects, including what would be the largest solar plant in the U.S.

EMMA FOEHRINGER MERCHANT | JUNE 25, 2019



The trio of projects is due online in 2023.

NV Energy one-upped its huge 2018 solar and storage [procurement](#) on Tuesday, announcing three new solar projects totaling 1,200 megawatts paired with 590 megawatts of battery storage.

Colin Smith, a senior solar analyst at Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables, called the procurement “hulkingly big.” When built, one of the projects — at 690 megawatts — will be the largest solar plant in the U.S., according to tracking from WoodMac

The three solar-plus-storage projects, developed by 8minute Solar Energy, EDF Renewables and Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners and Arevia Power, should be complete by 2023. Two will be built on the Moapa Band of Paiutes Indian River Reservation, in partnership with the tribe.

Aside from their massive size, the contracts also come as a vote of confidence in utility-scale solar-plus-storage, according to analysts. Developer 8minute said its project could run 65 percent of the time during peak summer hours, as opposed to the 29.9 percent availability of the average solar plant in Nevada.

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“That’s really a paradigm shift from the utility had to take my power whenever the sun was shining to the utility telling us what their customer’s needs are and we design and engineer a power plant to fit those criteria,” said Tom Buttgenbach, president and CEO at 8minute. “The days of renewable equals intermittent and a headache for utilities to integrate into their systems is now reversed to where this delivers exactly what the utility wants.”

Doug Cannon, NV Energy’s president and CEO, said in a statement that the addition of battery storage “helps extend the benefits of these solar projects.”

The Berkshire Hathaway-owned utility, which provides about 81 percent of the state’s electricity, said the projects will push it past a target to **double renewable energy capacity between 2018 and 2023. Next the utility is working to meet a new 50 percent by 2030 renewable portfolio standard (RPS) **passed** this year.**

WoodMac’s Smith said the back-to-back, big-time procurements show that utilities can make the quick transition towards renewable resources that’s under discussion in states and at the federal level through policies like the Green New Deal.

“When we go back to the question of, can we make the transition fast enough to help climate change, it’s easy to point to someone like NV Energy, which is a pretty large utility in a pretty large state,” said Smith. “They’re moving towards renewables at a pretty rapid pace.”

If the past two years offer any indication, NV will keep picking up renewables at a clip. The utility’s 2018 procurement totaled 1,001 megawatts with 100 megawatts of storage.

NV Energy did not respond to request for comment on where the latest projects position the utility in meeting the state’s fresh RPS, but according to a 2018 **report from the Nevada Governor’s Office of Energy, the utility had consistently met the**

state's requirements from 2013 to 2018.

NV Energy did not disclose power purchase agreement prices for the projects, but 8minute said its project, at 300 megawatts of solar and 135-megawatts of 4-hour storage, will come in around \$35 per megawatt hour. That's comparable with the projects NV signed last year, which ranged between \$30.94 and \$36.94 per megawatt hour.

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