

Project Datasheet

Topaz Solar Farm

San Luis Obispo County, California, USA

Developer:	First Solar, Inc.
Size:	550MW (AC)
Status:	Permitting
Туре:	Ground-Mount
Power Output For:	~160,000 average California homes
CO ₂ Displacement:	~377,000 metric tons per year* (~73,000 cars off the road)

Project Timeline



Project at a Glance

- 550MW (AC) of clean, renewable power
- Located on approximately 3,500 acres
- Approximately 400 jobs created
- No water used to generate electricity
- Minimal noise
- Low visual impact
- Panels recycled after useful lifespan

Overview

First Solar, Inc., a leading manufacturer of photovoltaic (PV) panels and provider of solar solutions, is developing a 550 megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) solar farm in San Luis Obispo County, California. Located on the northwestern corner of the Carrisa Plains, the Topaz Solar Farm will produce sufficient electricity to power about 160,000 average California homes, displacing approximately 377,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions per year—the equivalent of taking about 73,000 cars off the road. San Luis Obispo County approved a Conditional Use Permit and certified an Environmental Impact Report for the project. Construction is planned to begin after final permitting details and financing are completed.

Topaz will contribute to both San Luis Obispo County and state objectives for clean, renewable energy sources, helping to meet California's goal for utilities to secure at least 33% of their electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.

Location



^{*} San Luis Obispo County, "Topaz Solar Farm Environmental Impact Report," March, 2011.

Community

First Solar is committed to being a good neighbor through our community involvement and through the environmentally mindful design of our solar projects. We are working with the residents and community members of the Carrisa Plains area and San Luis Obispo County as we plan the Topaz Solar Farm. Our goal is to collaborate with the local residents to build a project that benefits the community and is one of which we can all be proud.

The project will create approximately 400 construction jobs and 15 long-term positions while providing indirect benefits to dozens of businesses in the County. These benefits are expected to average \$3 to \$4 million a year. Tax revenues will benefit San Luis Obispo County. We are also dedicated to meeting the needs of the community by supporting local organizations and providing educational benefits for area schools and colleges.

Environment

First Solar projects have a low environmental impact. When in operation, our systems generate electricity with no air emissions, no waste production, and no water use, and have the smallest carbon footprint of any PV technology. The solar panels for the Topaz Solar Farm will stand about five and a half

feet above ground at their top edge, minimizing visual impact. Since there are no moving parts, the project will produce virtually no noise. In addition, no concrete will be used for the mounting racks. Instead, steel I-beams will be driven into the ground. Because of this feature, the land will remain largely unaffected and can be used for other purposes at the end of the project's lifespan. All on-site waste materials, such as pallets and cardboard, that can be recycled will be recycled.

We sited the project on agricultural land at the northwestern edge of the Carrisa Plains, miles from the more sensitive habitats in the Carrizo Plain National Monument. In addition, the design of the project requires minimal site disturbance and allows continual growth of vegetation beneath and between the rows of panels, preserving wildlife habitat such as that of the San Joaquin kit fox. First Solar is also consulting with the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to find practical solutions for issues such as kit fox movement and protection. The project will require only very minimal construction of new transmission infrastructure due to existing transmission lines on-site.

Project Benefits

- Establishes SLO County as a world leader in renewable energy, helping reach state and local goals
- Wages and benefits from 400 jobs over a three-year period, replacing some construction jobs hardest hit in the recession
- Ongoing payroll and local purchases of materials and services during operation expected to average \$3 to \$4 million per year
- Sales tax and property tax revenue of \$16 million for San Luis
 Obispo County
- Project-based learning research program with Cal Poly
- Educational benefits for local schools

First Solar's Approach

Clean. When in operation, First Solar systems generate electricity with no air emissions, no waste production, and no water use, and have the smallest carbon footprint of any PV technology.

Affordable. By driving down the cost of solar generation, First Solar continues to make new strides in meeting the worldwide demand for clean, renewable energy.

Sustainable. First Solar's proven business model delivers viable energy solutions on a global scale—environmentally and socially, as well as financially.

Global. With a worldwide footprint of manufacturing and project development capabilities, First Solar is able to scale renewable energy solutions to meet the diverse needs of nations around the globe.

Questions or Comments

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