



NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
312 ROSA L. PARKS AVE, 11TH FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
WWW.TN.GOV/ECD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2010

Contact: Laura Elkins

Phone: (615) 532-1910

E-mail: laura.elkins@tn.gov

DESIGN/BUILD CONTRACTOR NAMED FOR WEST TENNESSEE SOLAR FARM

Volunteer State Solar Initiative Helps Tennessee Lead in Renewable Energy Sector

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The State Building Commission today approved Chattanooga-based Signal Energy as the design/build contractor for the West Tennessee Solar Farm to be located along Interstate 40 in Haywood County. The proposed five-megawatt, 30-acre power generation facility is part of Governor Phil Bredesen’s Volunteer State Solar Initiative, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and will be one of the largest solar installations in the Southeast.

“The West Tennessee Solar Farm is a significant step forward for the development of the clean energy industry in Tennessee,” said Governor Bredesen. “Through the Volunteer State Solar Initiative we are supporting the manufacturing and installation sectors of the solar industry and creating new jobs and opportunities for Tennesseans. In the long run we are strengthening Tennessee’s reputation as a national clean energy leader and solar power hub.”

The Department of Economic and Community Development has contracted with the University of Tennessee to oversee planning, operation and management of the West Tennessee Solar Farm. The Farm will consist of over 20,000 high efficiency silicon-based photovoltaic modules in a 5 MW configuration, expected to produce more than 7,000 megawatt hours of electricity annually. Installation of the solar modules is expected to begin in October 2010 with completion the following spring.

“Millions of Americans traveling I-40 each year will pass by the West Tennessee Solar Farm,” said Matt Kisber, commissioner, Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. “By demonstrating the zero-carbon production of electricity on a highly visible and significant scale, the Solar Farm highlights Tennessee’s commitment to supporting the solar industry and will encourage future renewable-energy interest and investments here in Tennessee.”

UT selected Signal Energy following a competitive request-for-proposal process. Signal Energy is a full service design/build contractor providing engineering, procurement and construction services for renewable energy projects across North America. As a subsidiary of EMJ corporation, Signal Energy is the renewable energy arm of one of the nation’s largest general contractors.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation will also build an education and welcome center at the Solar Farm which will serve as an educational facility for the public and students to learn about renewable energy. The Solar Farm will utilize commercially available power generation technology, but may also test new technology under real world conditions.

---more---

The Volunteer State Solar Initiative is a comprehensive solar energy and economic development program focusing on job creation, education, renewable power production and technology commercialization and is being established using \$62.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding received by ECD. The Initiative consists of two components, the West Tennessee Solar Farm and the Tennessee Solar Institute at UT.

“The University of Tennessee is committed to the Volunteer State Solar Initiative and is leading the way by creating strategic partnerships with Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the solar industry,” said David Millhorn, UT Executive Vice President. “With recent solar investments in the state, UT has a unique opportunity to leverage expertise, technology, and research partnerships to advance Tennessee’s position as a leader in solar innovation.”

The Tennessee Solar Institute is a center of excellence bringing together scientists, engineers and technical experts with business leaders and policymakers to help speed the improvement and deployment of solar photovoltaic technology. The Institute has also created the “Solar Opportunity Fund” to underwrite a series of Solar Installation and Innovation grants.

The Institute began accepting applications on June 21, 2010 for the Solar Installation Grants available to Tennessee businesses to assist in the purchase and installation of small-scale photovoltaic solar systems on or adjacent to existing non-residential buildings or structures. A total of \$9 million in Installation Grants of up to \$245,000 is available to companies on a first come, first served basis.

The Institute’s Solar Innovation Grants are designed to encourage the development of Tennessee’s solar industry and help qualifying Tennessee solar industry firms seeking technical assistance, facility or process improvements, and workforce development. The program is intended to accelerate market transformation toward renewable energy and encourage energy efficiency and conservation.

Announcements relative to the \$14.5 million pool of funding available as part of the Innovation Grant program are forthcoming.

The Tennessee Solar Institute is housed on the campus of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. For more information visit <http://solar.tennessee.edu>.

About the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development’s mission is to create higher skilled, better paying jobs for all Tennesseans. The department seeks to attract new corporate investment in Tennessee and works with Tennessee companies to facilitate expansion and economic growth. To find out more, go to www.tn.gov/ecd or www.investtennessee.org.

About Signal Energy

As a subsidiary of EMJ Corporation, one of the nation’s largest general contractors, Signal Energy boasts an impressive track record and solid financial strength. The company has completed more than 25 full design-build renewable energy projects ranging from 10MW to over 120MW for clients including BP Wind Energy, Chevron Global Power, Valero Energy, Enel, Noble Environmental Power, WKN, Vestas and John Deere Wind Energy. The company also ranked 25th in the “Top 50 in Power” from *Engineering News Record Magazine*, and can provide bonding for any renewable energy project. For more information, please visit www.signal-energy.com.