

# Solar Energy Power Plants

Board of Supervisors / Planning & Zoning Commission Joint Work Session

February 11, 2026



# Presentation Overview

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# Why Talk About Solar Farms Now?

## Industry Growth

Federal incentives and strong market demand are accelerating utility-scale solar development, there is sustained interest in Cochise County.

## Development Impacts

Land use compatibility, opportunity costs, views, drainage, construction dust and traffic, wildlife, long-term site restoration

## Board Concerns

Appropriateness/need of use  
Emergency response associated with use  
Long-term county protection (decommissioning, financial assurance)

# The Good

## Property Tax & Fiscal

- Long-term property tax revenue (centrally assessed/valued by the State; distributed locally)
- Low ongoing demand on local services relative to land area
- Lease payments can provide steady income to property owners

## Jobs & Local Spending

- Construction: hundreds of temporary (18-months) high-paying jobs
- Ongoing spending for vegetation control, security, and repairs (modest)

## Environmental & Infrastructure

- Low operational demands/emissions
- Low ongoing water use (some panel washing)
- Can pair with battery storage to improve grid reliability/redundancy
- Actively managed vegetation can reduce dust/erosion and can lower wildfire fuel

**Predictable, reversable land use**

# The Bad

## Property Tax & Economic Concerns

- Typically yields lower revenue per acre than developed commercial or industrial uses; however, projects are frequently sited on land with limited feasibility for such development.
- Very few permanent jobs
- Depreciation reduces taxable value over time
- Property value concerns for adjacent homes (real/perceived)

## Jobs & Local Spending

- Large land footprint and long-term single-use commitment (opportunity cost)

## Equity/Fairness

- Perception of “exported power” - supporting growth elsewhere
- Siting concentration – overburden/solar fatigue

**Compatibility conflicts** with nearby uses - residential, airports, military operations, tourism.

# Where Solar Farms Are Allowed & Application Attachments

Utility-scale solar serving off-site consumers



## By -right

LI (Light Industrial), HI (Heavy Industrial)

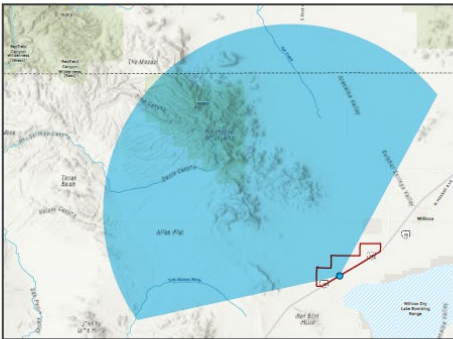


## Special Use

RU (Rural), GB (General Business)

County may require studies as part of the SUP or permit application:

- Drainage/soils reports
- Water budget
- Environmental Assessments
- Visual Impact Analysis
- FAA Obstruction Analysis
- Cultural Assessments



● KOP □ Project Boundary ■ Photo Angle

Base Photographic Documentation	
Date	03/15/2023
Time	11:54:58
Viewpoint Elevation (ft)	4,196

Proposed Infrastructure Information	
Closest Distance to Panels (ft)	98

# Site and Design Standards



## Height Requirements

- 20 ft ground/pole
- 10 ft roof (at max tilt)



## Setbacks

2x district minimum OR tallest-structure height (whichever greater)



## Groundcover

Perennial vegetation maintained for project life



## Utilities

- On-site lines buried where feasible
- Interconnect may be overhead



## Fencing

Wildlife-friendly where possible

# Enforcement & End -of -Life Protections

## Transfers

- Written acceptance of obligations required
- County may reassess bond

## Abandonment

- Nonfunctional 1 year → remove and restore

## Financial Assurance

- Required
- Updated at least every 5 years
- Usable for noncompliance costs



## Damage/Violations

- Correct within 90 days after notice

## Decommissioning Plan

- Required with permit
- Engineer cost estimate included
- Site restoration also required

# Conditions: Project Specific (typical)

Construction requirements – traffic control and road maintenance plan, road surface stabilizer, waste disposal plan, bond

Wildlife design requirements (fencing, anti migratory bird surveys ...) -reflectivity, spacing of panels,

Groundcover coverage requirements (erosion and dust control)

Additional SWPPP requirements (no grading during high winds, limited vehicle speed, covered hauling trucks ...)

Emergency Response Plan (5 -year updates)

# Comprehensive Plan Link (CP2045)

## Policy Guardrails

### Energy Goal 1: Harness the Wind, Capture the Sun

- Policy 1: Prioritize solar and wind renewable energy development in areas with **low agricultural, ecological, and scenic sensitivity, on rooftops, parking lots, brownfields, and other previously disturbed sites** before considering undeveloped land. (sites with least conflicts)
- Policy 2: For utility-scale solar or wind facilities, give preference to sites **with access to existing roads, transmission lines, and substations** to reduce costs and minimize impacts. (sites more likely to succeed)
- Policy 3: Align County review with state and federal processes to ensure protection of wildlife, sensitive habitats, and cultural resources. (align resource protection)
- Policy 4: Promote early and ongoing community engagement to ensure transparency and public support. (early engagement / lower community opposition)
- Policy 5: Maximize local economic benefits through workforce training, contracting, and procurement opportunities. (increase local benefit/jobs)
- Policy 6: Ensure utility-scale energy facilities coordinate with County emergency management and applicable response agencies as part of project planning and review. (public safety)

# Comprehensive Plan Link (CP2045)

## Policy Guardrails

### Energy Goal 5: Protecting What Matters

- Policy 1: Encourage energy projects that avoid ecologically sensitive areas, high-value agricultural land, and significant scenic or tourism-related viewsheds. (site selection)
- Policy 2: Protect water resources, wildlife habitats, and culturally significant areas **during planning and permitting.** (timing)
- Policy 3: Encourage and promote **dual-use** opportunities, such as solar on parking lots, agricultural land, or flood control infrastructure, to maximize benefits. (dual-use)

Potential next step, zoning overlay

# Economic Impacts (Undeveloped/Rangeland)

## Scenario Assumptions

Land area: 2,300 acres

Development density: 1 dwelling per 4 acres, currently vacant/undeveloped rangeland (Rural Zoning)

### **If property remains undeveloped/rangeland:**

Undeveloped property: A typical 2,300-acre undeveloped rural zoned parcel in Cochise County can generate \$0.19 per acre per year in property tax

Current taxes: \$430/year (\$92/year county portion)

40-year tax revenue (undeveloped): **\$17,204 total** (\$3,600 county portion)

# How Solar Farms Are Taxed in Arizona

- Utility-scale solar is taxable in Arizona
- Solar equipment is centrally valued by ADOR (cost-based with depreciation)
- The County receives property tax revenue based on tax rates (County, special districts, school districts)
- Most of the tax benefit comes from centrally valued equipment, not land value
- Revenue flows to multiple local entities, especially schools and countywide districts

# Economic Impacts (SEPP/BESS PROJECT)

## Scenario Assumptions\*

Land area: 2,300 acres

Development density: 7 acres per MW (typical utility-scale planning assumption)

Estimated facility size: 300 MW solar, 300 MW battery storage

Personal property value centrally assessed:

Solar equipment: \$190 M

Battery Equipment: \$224 M

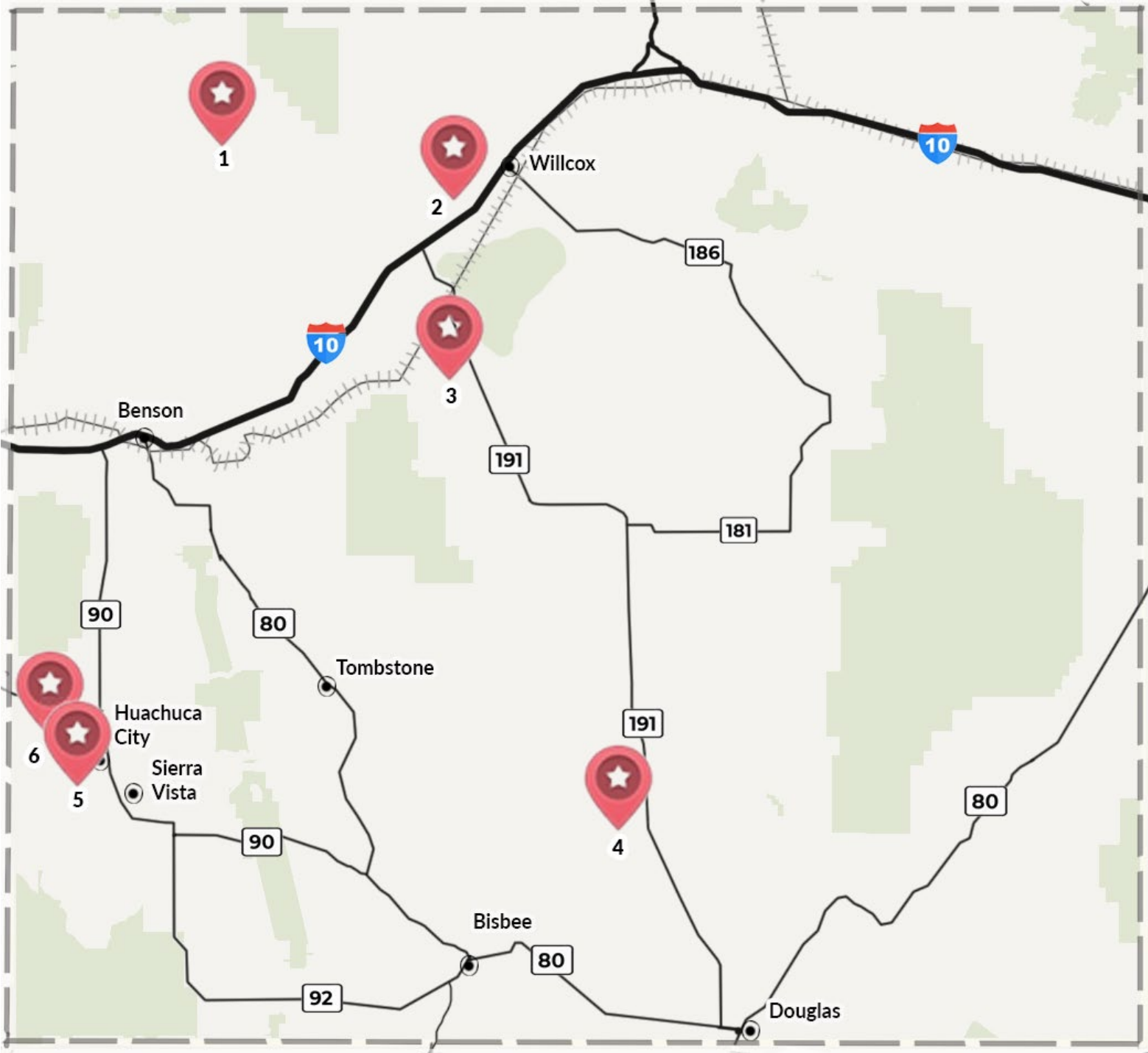
Total: \$414 M

Taxes: \$840 k/year (\$455 k/year county portion)

40-year tax revenue (solar farm with battery) **\$34 M total** (\$18.2 M county portion)

*\*Estimates are based on typical utility-scale planning assumptions and current centrally assessed valuation practices; actual development, valuation, and tax revenues may vary.*

# Where Are Solar Farms in Cochise County?



- 1 – Red Horse 2 (SEPP and WEPP)
- 2- Winchester Solar (SEPP and BESS) under construction
- 3 – AEPCO (SEPP and BESS) 2 projects
- 4 – McNeal Solar (SEPP and BESS)
- 5 – TEP Solar (SEPP)
- 6 – Babacomari (SEPP), recently energized

\*6 additional locations have received SUP approval.

Questions/Suggestions/Discussion