



October 7th Event in St. Charles Features New ‘Butter Solar’ Portfolio of Projects

Officials from City of St. Charles, Organic Valley, and solar developers will discuss the innovative solar project and how others can replicate its success in Greater Minnesota

Media Contact: Dan Thiede, Clean Energy Resource Teams, thie0235@umn.edu or 651-334-0000



Aerial view of the solar installation in St. Charles, MN that is part of the larger Butter Solar Portfolio.

St. Charles, MINN. (October 1, 2019) – On Monday, October 7 from 2:00-4:30pm, the public is invited to the St. Charles Community Center to learn more about the St. Charles Solar Facility—a part of the Butter Solar Portfolio—and the model that made it all possible.

The Butter Solar Portfolio of projects brought Organic Valley to 100% renewably powered this year. The 23 MW_{AC} Butter Solar Portfolio, owned and operated by BluEarth Renewables US, includes 10 solar facilities and is located across three states feeding into 13 municipal utilities. The City of St. Charles hosts one of two Minnesota sites. Join us to hear from the city, Organic Valley, and the solar developer about the project and how it can be a model for others.

“We can’t wait to share this model, which advances approaches to mid-scale dispersed solar through partnerships,” shared Lissa Pawlisch, Director with the Clean Energy Resource Teams. “This is a truly innovative collaboration among companies, developers, and utilities to advance their respective goals.”

RSVP for this free event at <https://buttersolarminn.eventbrite.com> or 612-626-0555.

Event Agenda:

- 2:00pm – Welcome & Introductions – *Lissa Pawlisch, Clean Energy Resource Teams*
- 2:15pm – Project Overview – *Nick Koverman, City of St. Charles*
- 2:30pm – Project Details – *Stanley Minnick, Organic Valley; Eric Udelhofen, OneEnergy Renewables; and Chris Barnes, BluEarth Renewables*
- 3:00pm – Panel Discussion, Q&A – *All speakers*
- 4:00pm – Networking
- 4:15pm – Adjourn and drive to view solar site (optional)

More Background on the Butter Solar Portfolio

Organic Valley, America's largest cooperative of organic farmers and one of the nation's leading organic brands, announced in August 2019 that construction of three community solar projects totaling 12.67 MW_{DC} is complete, making the cooperative the largest food company in the world to be 100 percent renewably powered. These solar projects are part of the 23 MW_{AC} Butter Solar Portfolio which is owned and operated by BluEarth Renewables US.

To reach its 100 percent renewable electricity commitment set forth in 2017, Organic Valley collaborated with OneEnergy Renewables and a group of midwestern municipal utilities referred to as the Upper Midwest Municipal Energy Group (UMMEG), which includes St. Charles, Minnesota. In late 2018, BluEarth Renewables US acquired Butter Solar and they began construction in January 2019. Butter Solar will provide 23,000 people across 10 Midwest communities with reduced energy costs for more than 25 years through projects in or near their community.

“Our community solar partnership allows us to share the benefits of solar energy with our rural neighbors, advancing our mission to care for the people and farms we work with, as well as our planet,” says Bob Kirchoff, CEO of Organic Valley. “Just as ours has done, community-scale solar projects can also create meaningful and good-paying jobs where they are needed most.”

“We are proud to partner with organizations such as Organic Valley and make these valuable solar projects a reality for the local communities,” said Jamey Fitzgibbon, Executive Vice-President, Engineering and Construction of BluEarth Renewables. “As we add more renewable energy to the power grid every day, we are committed to creating a more sustainable environment for generations to come.”

For St. Charles, this project was a win-win. “Diversifying our alternative energy portfolio is simply good planning as we strive to meet and exceed our renewable mandate,” stated City Administrator Nick Koverman. “But moreover, the partnership that was created allows St. Charles to receive the benefit of a long-term power purchase arrangement, which in turn helps to stabilize rates.” In addition, St. Charles benefits because the power is generated in their backyard, which saves on the rising cost of transmission. “We will not truly understand the full savings of transmission and purchased power until after a year of production, but because of the rising expenses mentioned, we knew it was worth the investment.”

In addition to the economic benefits, the St. Charles Solar Facility features pollinator-friendly plantings under and around the panels to reduce runoff, enhance soil health and stability, and provide a habitat and food source for pollinators, beneficial insects, and wildlife.

For more than 25 years, Organic Valley will buy renewable energy credits (RECs) from three solar projects, owned and operated by BluEarth Renewables US, to help support the project and keep electricity prices low for everyone that lives in these rural Midwestern communities. Other organizations including Dr. Bronner's, the City of Madison, and Native Energy have also agreed to buy RECs from their own project or groups of projects, as part of a shared commitment to lower their carbon footprint. “It was the combined financial impact of all the REC partners that enabled the projects to be financially viable; scaling up is what made this possible,” says Stanley Minnick, Energy Services & Technology Manager of Organic Valley.

For more information about the October 7 event and to RSVP, visit <https://buttersolar.mn.eventbrite.com>.

This event is co-hosted by Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), City of St. Charles, Organic Valley, and OneEnergy Renewables.

- **About the Clean Energy Resource Teams:** The Clean Energy Resource Teams, or CERTs, connects individuals and communities in Minnesota to the resources they need to identify and implement community-based clean energy projects. CERTs is a partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Minnesota Department of Commerce, Southwest Regional Development Commission, and Great Plains Institute. Learn more at www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org.

- About City of St. Charles Electric Department: The City of St. Charles Electric Department is a public electrical utility with the responsibility of serving the public's needs for power. Power for its customers is purchased from Mi-Energy Cooperative and dispersed through distribution lines, transformers and meters for each customer. The Department is responsible for the engineering, construction and maintenance of the system for distribution of electrical energy, including electric connects and disconnects, installing electrical facilities, and providing and maintaining back-up generation systems. The Department constructs and maintains electrical transformers, overhead and underground power lines and meters for power and water consumption. They are committed to providing their customers with superior electric services at competitive prices in an environmentally, responsible manner. To learn more visit www.stcharlesmn.org/city-services/electric-department.
- About Organic Valley: Organic Valley is America's largest cooperative of organic farmers and one of the nation's leading organic brands. Organized in 1988, it represents nearly 2,000 farmers in 34 U.S. states and has over \$1.1 billion in sales. Focused on its founding mission of saving family farms through organic farming, Organic Valley produces a wide range of organic dairy, eggs and produce. With its regional model, milk is produced, bottled and distributed right in the region where it is farmed to ensure fewer miles from farm to table and to support our local economies. For further information visit www.organicvalley.coop.
- About OneEnergy Renewables: OneEnergy Renewables is an innovative developer of community and utility-scale solar energy projects in North America. Powered by the belief that the future will run on clean energy, their team delivers solar projects to communities, utilities, and commercial and institutional customers. They build trust with landowners, communities, and customers to help them achieve a cleaner, brighter energy future. Learn more at www.oneenergyrenewables.com.

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