

Teanaway Solar Reserve still waiting for green lights

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CLE ELUM – Almost a full year after the news first broke, locals are asking what happened to the Teanaway Solar Reserve solar farm proposed for a site above the Teanaway River Valley.

GordonDerr's Anna Nelson, a planner contracted by the county to monitor the public process since Day One, said Wednesday, June 9, "At the beginning of this month, the company resubmitted documents to Kittitas County Community Development Services, which were requested in connection with the environmental checklist. From this point, the process should move along fairly quickly."

Next step for Teanaway Solar is to go before the Kittitas County Board of Adjustment in Ellensburg for a hearing that will determine whether or not the firm gets the Conditional Use Permit it needs to break ground.

Dick Kloss, Board of Adjustment member, said the project had not yet made the docket, and he hadn't heard of any movement in that direction.

Nonetheless, Meagan Walker, a public relations officer for Teanaway Solar Reserve, said she's pleased with

progress so far.

"We hope we'll have the first decision, on the environmental checklist, soon," she said.

"When we clear the Board of Adjustment, with a Conditional Use Permit in hand, we'll move very quickly to start hiring locally, beginning with a job fair. At that point we'll announce the scope of the jobs we have to offer and how people go about applying for them. We are determined to hire locally."

Walker said the company's intent is to sign on as many locals as possible for the groundbreaking phase of the project, as well as for each phase through build out.

"In addition, most of the 35 personnel required to maintain and operate the solar farm won't require special skills in solar industry disciplines. Most of those positions will not require a degree or certificate in renewable energies, with a focus on solar."

Weeks ago Walker said Teanaway Solar narrowed down choices for a solar panel manufacturer, but, she said, still no decision has been.

"After we select our manufacturer, we'll sit down together with candidates offering to site the plant in Cle Elum

and figure out which location makes sense for everybody."

Walker said the company would obviously like to break ground before snow flies.

"We can still work when it's snowing, but can't work when there's a whole lot of snow on the ground."

In the beginning ...

It was in July 2009 Teanaway Solar Reserve announced its intention to build the world's largest photovoltaic (solar) farm, surpassing the number one ranked 60-megawatt farm in Spain brought online in September 2008.

"It will be over five times larger than the largest solar photovoltaic installation in the United States today," said Senator Maria Cantwell.

"This could mean hundreds of jobs in Kittitas County associated with the Teanaway solar panel assembly plant alone."

The Reserve's solar farm is designed for 400,000 photovoltaic panels, capable of producing 75-megawatts. The 400-acre site, in the Teanaway, is four miles northeast of Cle Elum, accessible via East Masterson, Red Bridge, Weihl, and Loping Roads.

'Don't put profits above safety'

Sen. Murray chairs hearing on process safety failures – as well as proposed procedures and regulations that could help prevent future disasters

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) chaired a hearing of the Senate Employment and Workplace Safety Subcommittee to investigate the failure of oil and gas companies to learn from previous tragedies and implement effective worker safety processes.

Murray questioned witnesses on the lessons learned from past accidents, as well as what changes need to be made to better protect workers in the oil and gas industry. The hearing came on the same day that President Obama met with families of workers killed on the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster. The hearing also comes on the 11-year anniversary of the Bellingham pipeline explosion in Washington state, and Murray discussed the lessons learned from this tragedy and their relevance to worker safety today.

Murray invited BP executives to testify about the pattern of safety violations that led to the Deepwater Horizon accident that killed 11 work-

ers, but they refused to send a representative.

"Like so many Americans, I am horrified and outraged at the continued devastation in the Gulf Coast," Murray said at the hearing. "I want to make sure we don't forget about the oil and gas industry workers who deserve to be protected. These workers and their families deserve to understand what went wrong. And every single worker deserves to feel confident that while they are working hard and doing their jobs, their employers are doing everything possible to keep them safe."

Murray also commented on BP's absence at the hearing, saying, "I want to mention a witness who should be

here today but is not. I invited representatives from BP to be here to help us understand what has been going wrong at their company that has led to so many accidents, and what lessons they have learned from the disasters at their company – but they refused to be here.

"And honestly, I find it outrageous that even after an accident that killed 11 workers, BP is still not putting a high enough priority on worker safety to send a representative to a hearing specifically focused on protecting workers in their industry. I want to be clear – I am not going to stop working to get answers from BP – but I am extremely disappointed that they would not be here."

Need for Federal toxics reform

OLYMPIA – News of the recall of cadmium-tainted drinking glasses is yet another example of the failure of our current federal policies related to

Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA). "The approach of 'Oops, we contaminated children again, let's do a recall isn't good enough," said Ted Sturde-

Children's Safe Product Act. The act will require makers of children's products to report to Ecology on products that contain chemicals of concern to children. "The public has a right to ex-