

SME finalizing solar power deal

Clay Chandler, The Clarion-Ledger 1:02 p.m. CDT September 9, 2015



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South Mississippi Electric is finalizing an agreement with Origis Energy USA to buy electricity generated at a 52-megawatt solar energy facility near Sumrall in Lamar County.

The two have executed a letter of intent to proceed with further negotiations toward a deal in which Origis will design, develop, install and operate the electric generation site, and Hattiesburg-based SME will purchase all the power it produces. The project is expected to be operational by December 2016 and will provide electricity to about 10,000 homes in the first year.

This agreement comes on the heels of SME's announcement in May that it would build five smaller solar installations of 100 kW or less at five Electric Power Association member locations — Coahoma, Coast, Delta, Southern Pine and Singing River electric power associations. Those solar generation sites are expected to be completed in first quarter 2016.


"For many years, our goal for generation facilities has been fuel diversity," Jim Compton, SME's general manager and CEO, said in a press release. "Today we announce a new goal, to move beyond fuel: to add generation that does not require fossil fuel. Our members overwhelmingly want us to diversify our energy to include renewables, and we are responding."

"Origis is honored to team up with SME on this utility scale solar project," Origis Energy President Guy Vanderhaegen said. "Our team has received great support from the local community, the authorities and SME in the development of this project. The solar facility is a state of the art renewable energy source for SME and the members they serve. We are excited to break ground later this year."

SME generates, transmits and sells wholesale electric energy to 11 distribution cooperatives that deliver the electricity to 419,000 customers, or members. Collectively, the group is known as the Power of 12.


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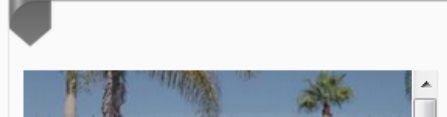
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