

Photon

The Solar Power Magazine

International

1-2014



What to attend in 2014

Formerly big solar trade fairs shrink,
local ones gain importance
– we offer an orientation



PID culprits

Lithium is a major cause for potential induced degradation in cells and modules

99% inverter from China

Growatt's 20 kW device scores third in PHOTON test, even without SiC transistors

Thermographic cameras

Most products tested achieved good grades but differ strongly in user-friendliness

Global news roundup

As EU imposes provisional duties on China glass, African and American markets thrive

Solar industry wins important regulatory victory

Call it the »icing on the cake.« Right before America's solar energy industry closed the books on a record-shattering year in 2013, we successfully convinced the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to approve a new rule that will expedite and reduce the cost of solar project interconnections, while maintaining the reliability and safety of the electric grid.

Simply put, this action – which SEIA championed for nearly 2 years – will help to spur new solar deployment nationwide. The rule was approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission.

In 2005, FERC issued Order No. 2006, which established national interconnection procedures applicable to generation projects that are 20 MW or less in size and subject to FERC's wholesale jurisdiction. Order No. 2006 was groundbreaking at the time, and the procedures were voluntarily adopted by many states to apply to the retail interconnection process. However, demand for solar energy has grown dramatically since the original order was issued more than 7 years ago, and certain aspects of the order have resulted in needless barriers to cost-effective and timely interconnections.

The rule approved in November will allow solar projects that meet certain technical requirements to qualify for a »fast track« interconnection process, thus eliminating the need for costly and time-consuming studies. Most importantly, the decision will help to reduce interconnection bottlenecks.

As an association, we applaud FERC for recognizing the challenges facing wholesale distributed generation development, which is one of the fastest-growing segments of America's solar energy industry. But it's important

to point out that the new rule also maintains electric system safety and reliability, making it a win all the way around.

This is the way government should work. We deeply appreciate FERC's open-minded approach and willingness to revisit this issue based on unforeseen developments. We look forward to working with FERC and all other interested stakeholders in the future to help further the deployment of clean, reliable and affordable solar energy nationwide. SEIA is also urging state regulators to consider using FERC's new rule as a model and starting point for updating their own interconnection rules.

And, finally, this brings me to the other really good news coming out of FERC recently. According to the agency's »Energy Infrastructure Update« report, 99.3 percent of all new electric generation placed in service during the month of October came from renewables – with solar leading the way by a country mile!

Twelve new solar units accounted for 504 MW or 72.1 percent of all new capacity in October. This is truly astonishing, not to mention historic, and should serve as a reminder to everyone in Washington and in state capitals that smart public policies – such as the solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC), Net Energy Metering (NEM) and Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) – are paying huge dividends for America.

There is now more than 9,400 MW of cumulative solar electric capacity installed in the US – enough to power more than 1.5 million American homes – and that number is expected to hit nearly 13,000 MW when the 2013 year-end numbers are tallied.

And if that news isn't good enough to start your year off on a positive note, **then here's one other thing – 2014 looks even better!**

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Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA)

▲ Rhone Resch, president of the US Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), writes a monthly column on solar power in the US.

tion of Hoku Materials' new but untouched \$700 million polysilicon factory in Pocatello, Idaho, submitted the highest bid for the facility during a recent auction. JH Kelly submitted a bid of \$5.273 million for the facility and its assets after an effort to sell the plant piecemeal only generated offers totaling \$4.78 million, reports the Idaho State Journal. The purchaser must come to an independent agreement with the city of Pocatello regarding the continued use of the property. The federal court overseeing the Hoku Corp. bankruptcy must approve the offer before the transaction can be completed. Solar products and services firm Hoku Corp. is the parent company of Hoku Materials. JH Kelly says that if it is successful in acquiring the facility, it intends to work with Pocatello to attract a new user to the property and recoup as much as it can of the money it was owed by Hoku. The facility cost approximately \$700 million to build – Hoku Corp. filed for Chapter 7

bankruptcy in July 2013, leaving JH Kelly with \$25 million in unpaid expenses.

North Carolina

Duke Energy has begun construction of three PV power plants totaling 30 MW. Duke Energy Renewables, a business unit of Duke Energy, the largest power utility in the US, has broken ground on three PV power plants with a combined capacity of 30 MW in eastern North Carolina. The company is building a 20 MW project, named Dogwood Solar Power Project, near Scotland Neck, in Halifax County, and two 5 MW PV plants in Windsor, Bertie County, and Bethel, Pitt County, respectively. All three projects, which will sell their output through long-term, fixed price contracts, will be completed by the end of 2013. Chinese solar company Rene-Sola Ltd. has provided 140,000 multicrystalline modules for the three projects.

Rhode Island

US independent power producer Nexamp Inc. has completed what it is calling New England's largest rooftop PV system, a 2.4 MW PV array located atop an office park in Rhode Island. Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee »flipped the switch« on the \$7 million, 8,500-panel installation on Nov. 6. Nexamp, which is leasing the rooftop from Quonset Business Park on behalf of the PV system's owner, True Green LLC, said the project was made possible through several renewable energy laws passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 2011. Under the state's distributed generation program, a state board sets ceiling prices that developers can charge for renewable energy. Winning bidders are awarded a 15-year contract with National Grid, which otherwise might not be agreeable to such terms. For the next 15 years, National