FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 19, 2019

Solar Farm 2.0 to Nearly Triple on Campus Renewable Energy Production

CHAMPAIGN, IL – Construction of a new 54-acre, 12.1 megawatt (MWdc) Solar Farm is approved by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees as the sole member of Prairieland Energy, Inc. Referred to as "Solar Farm 2.0," the new utility-scale array to be located north of Curtis Road, between First Street and U.S. Route 45, will produce approximately 20,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) annually, almost tripling the university’s existing on-site renewable energy generation. Solar Farm 2.0 will generate the equivalent electricity use of more than 2,000 average American homes.

Sol Systems, LLC, will design, build, operate, and maintain Solar Farm 2.0, for the duration of a 20-year contract which includes power purchase and land lease agreements, and an option to buy the system at the end of the term. Prairieland Energy, Inc. (PEI) will buy the solar energy at a fixed rate of $45.99 per megawatt hour during that period on behalf of the Urbana campus. As part of the agreement, the university will receive Renewable Energy Certificates and the associated right to claim the use of clean energy. The $20.1M contract is anticipated to provide a cost savings of approximately $300,000 in the first year as compared to purchasing electricity in the traditional market.

Once Solar Farm 2.0 is operational, the university will meet Illinois Climate Action Plan (iCAP) objectives for solar installations on campus property of 25,000 MWh/year by FY25, which represents 10% of the expected electrical demand in 2050. With both solar farms in production, the U of I will be the third-largest user of renewable power generated on-site, for higher-education facilities in the country.

F&S Executive Director Dr. Mohamed Attalla said, "Solar Farm 2.0 is a tremendous achievement for campus sustainability that shows the university’s continuing commitment to climate leadership. The array moves the university closer to achieving its pledge of carbon neutrality as soon as possible and builds resilience to climate change within the local community."

Solar Farm 2.0 discussions started in April 2017 when the Energy Sustainability Working Advisory Team (SWATeam) recommended expanding the original Solar Farm, located near the south side of Windsor Road between First Street and the railroad tracks, or building a new solar installation. The Sustainability Council approved the Solar Farm 2.0 concept in November 2017 with site selection made by the Chancellor’s Capital Review Committee in July 2018.

Prairieland Energy, Inc. published a Request for Proposals on February 22, 2019, seeking proposals to enter into a power purchase agreement for investment in—and sourcing of—sustainable energy with a term not to exceed 20 years.

-more-
A project selection committee reviewed 19 vendor submissions in May 2019, and after a thorough review of technical criteria and total project cost, Sol Systems, LLC was identified as the preferred vendor.

From 2015 to 2017, several methods for achieving the iCAP on-campus solar goal were evaluated by campus stakeholders, including additional rooftop solar and parking area canopies. A solar array expansion was determined to be the best option to achieve the production goal. Solar Farm 2.0 will be connected to the university’s electrical grid which further reduces delivery and transmission costs.

The site will also feature a landscaped buffer between Solar Farm 2.0 and the Village of Savoy, along Curtis Road. The areas under the panels will be planted and maintained as a pollinator habitat to enhance ecosystems for local and migratory birds and insects, including butterflies and bees. When completed, this site will serve as a demonstration for pollinator-friendly solar arrays, following the requirements of the Pollinator Friendly Solar Site Act (Illinois Pub. Act 100-1022).

“We are intertwining nature and this utility project in a way that creates a truly multifunctional landscape; enhancing the aesthetics of this corridor, providing habitat for wildlife and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Campus landscapes in the future will borrow heavily from this model,” said University Landscape Architect Brent Lewis.

Solar Farm 2.0 will complement the energy production of the first Solar Farm on campus, which is 21-acres and produces approximately 7,000 MWh/year of electricity, since December 2015. The Board of Trustees approved the original Solar Farm in November 2012. Together with smaller-scale rooftop arrays, the Urbana campus on-site solar generation will account for more than 50% of the renewable energy portfolio for campus, surpassing the 25,000 MWh/year of renewable wind energy purchased externally through the 2016 power purchase agreement with Rail Splitter Wind Farm, LLC.

###

Media Contact:
Steve Breitwieser
Customer Relations & Communications
Facilities & Services
sbreit@illinois.edu
217-300-2155

Department Contact:
Morgan White
Associate Director for Sustainability
Facilities & Services
mbwhite@illinois.edu
217-333-2668

Facilities & Services (F&S), provides and maintains a physical environment that is conducive to supporting learning, discovery, engagement, and economic development at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. www.fs.illinois.edu

Prairieland Energy, Inc. (PEI) is an Illinois corporation founded in 1996 that is solely owned by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois and functions as a university-
related organization. PEI’s primary mission is to provide energy commodities that support the reliable provision of energy services to each of the University of Illinois locations. [https://www.plandenergy.com/](https://www.plandenergy.com/)

**Sol Systems, LLC (Sol)** head quartered in Washington, DC has delivered more than 800 MW of solar projects for Fortune 100 companies, municipalities, universities, churches, and small businesses. Sol now manages over $650 million in solar energy assets for utilities, banks, and Fortune 500 companies.