

KYMEA POWER POST

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Ashwood Solar I Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

BY MICHELLE HIXON

The Kentucky Municipal Energy Agency (KYMEA) was thrilled to announce the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Ashwood Solar I project, which took place on June 25, 2025. This significant event marked the culmination of years of planning, development, and collaboration to bring renewable energy to the region. Ashwood was constructed and will be operated by RWE with an agreement for KYMEA to purchase 100% of the energy produced by the project over a 20-year term.

The Ashwood Solar I project, located in Lyon County, Kentucky, will provide clean, sustainable power to KYMEA's member communities. With a capacity of 86 megawatts, the project is expected to generate enough electricity to power approximately 15,000 homes annually. This initiative was a testament to KYMEA's commitment to promoting environmental stewardship and fiscal responsibility.

The 11 KYMEA Kentucky communities receiving power from the project are: Barbourville Utility Commission, Bardwell City Utilities, Benham Power Board, Berea Municipal Utilities, City Utilities Commission of Corbin, City of Falmouth, Frankfort

Plant Board, Madisonville Electric Department, City of Olive Hill, City of Paris Combined Utilities, and the City of Providence Utilities.

"The commissioning of Ashwood Solar marks a proud milestone for KYMEA, and our member communities," said Doug Buresh, President & Chief Executive Officer, KYMEA. "This project reflects our long-term commitment to delivering clean, reliable, and cost-effective energy to the people of Kentucky. Our 20-year partnership with RWE ensures that our members benefit from homegrown solar power while supporting local economic development and environmental stewardship. We are excited to see this vision come to life in Lyon County and look forward to the positive impact it will have for decades to come."

Read the full press release on our website at <https://www.kynea.org/ashwood-solar-i-ribbon-cutting-ceremony/>.

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A New Era at the EPA

BY DOUG BURESH



Greetings,

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established by President Richard Nixon and officially began operations on December 2, 1970. At the time, the EPA was formed in response to growing public concern about environmental pollution and the lack of coordinated federal oversight. Prior to its creation, environmental responsibilities were scattered across various federal

agencies, making regulation and enforcement inconsistent and ineffective. The original purpose of the EPA was to:

- Consolidate federal research, monitoring, and enforcement activities related to environmental protection.
- Establish and enforce environmental standards for air and water quality.
- Regulate pollutants that pose a risk to human health and the environment.
- Support state and local governments in their environmental efforts.
- Conduct environmental research and education to inform policy and public awareness.

Over the past fifty years, both major political parties have influenced the direction of the EPA to further their respective policy objectives. Democratic administrations have tended to broaden the agency's regulatory scope to address issues such as climate change and environmental justice, though these efforts are sometimes criticized as regulatory overreach. Conversely, Republican administrations frequently seek to limit EPA authority, emphasizing economic impacts and states' rights. As a result, each administration adjusts the agency's priorities, staffing, and enforcement approaches, leading to significant shifts in policy.

LEE ZELDIN'S SWEEPING DEREGULATORY AGENDA

On January 29, 2025, Lee Zeldin was sworn in as the 17th Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. In what has been described as the most transformative moment in the Environmental Protection Agency's history, Administrator Lee Zeldin has launched a sweeping deregulatory campaign aimed at reshaping the agency's role in environmental governance. Under the banner of "Powering the Great American Comeback," Zeldin's EPA is pursuing 31 historic actions that promise to roll back regulations across energy, transportation, manufacturing, and environmental justice sectors.

These changes, aligned with President Donald Trump's second-term agenda, mark a dramatic shift from the climate-focused policies of previous Obama and Biden administrations.

THE ENDANGERMENT FINDING: THE HEART OF THE ROLLBACK

At the center of Zeldin's deregulatory push is the proposed repeal

of the 2009 Endangerment Finding—a scientific determination that greenhouse gases pose a threat to public health and welfare. This finding has served as the legal foundation for regulating emissions from vehicles, power plants, and industrial sources under the Clean Air Act.

Zeldin argues that the Endangerment Finding has been used to justify over \$1 trillion in regulations, including mandates for electric vehicles and renewable fuels. "We are driving a dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion," Zeldin declared during a press event in Indianapolis. If repealed, the EPA would lose its statutory authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions, effectively dismantling the federal government's climate mitigation framework.

The implications are vast. Removing the Endangerment Finding would eliminate emissions standards for light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles, including the controversial stop-start feature in cars. It would also jeopardize subsidies for alternative fuels and carbon markets, potentially disrupting industries that have invested heavily in clean energy technologies.

UNLEASHING AMERICAN ENERGY

Zeldin's agenda includes a broad reconsideration of regulations that he claims have "suffocated" the American energy sector. Among the targeted rules are:

- Clean Power Plan 2.0: Designed to reduce emissions from power plants.
- Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS): Aimed at limiting toxic emissions from coal-fired plants.
- Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program: Requires large emitters to disclose emissions data.
- Wastewater regulations for oil and gas development: Intended to protect water resources.

Zeldin contends that these rules have imposed hidden taxes on American families and businesses. By rolling them back, he believes the U.S. can achieve energy dominance, lower utility costs, and revive domestic manufacturing.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONSUMER CHOICE

One of the most controversial aspects of Zeldin's plan is the rollback of vehicle emissions standards. The EPA has proposed eliminating all greenhouse gas regulations for cars and trucks, including those introduced during the Obama and Biden administrations. This move would effectively end federal mandates for electric vehicles and allows automakers to produce higher-emission models without penalty.

Zeldin frames this as a win for consumer freedom. "We're putting choice back in the driver's seat," he said. The EPA estimates that repealing these standards could save Americans \$54 billion annually.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND AGENCY RESTRUCTURING

Zeldin has ordered the elimination of the EPA's environmental justice programs. These initiatives, which focused on protecting



vulnerable communities from pollution, have been disbanded, and approximately 170 staffers placed on leave.

Zeldin has also proposed a significant reorganization of the agency, including:

- Terminating the Office of Environmental Justice.
- Reconstituting the Science Advisory Board and Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee.
- Redirecting enforcement resources to focus on “core mission” priorities.

These changes reflect Zeldin’s belief that the EPA has overstepped its bounds and become too bureaucratic. “We are restoring the rule of law and giving power back to the states,” he said.

LEGAL CHALLENGES AND SCIENTIFIC DEBATE

The proposed repeal of the Endangerment Finding is expected to face intense legal scrutiny. The EPA must justify its decision through a formal rulemaking process, including public comment and scientific review. Legal experts anticipate a wave of lawsuits from states, environmental groups, and industry stakeholders seeking to preserve existing regulations.

Zeldin’s EPA has cited recent Supreme Court decisions—such as *West Virginia v. EPA* and *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*—as evidence that regulatory authority should rest with Congress, not administrative agencies. These rulings have reinforced the “major questions doctrine,” which limits agencies from making sweeping policy decisions without explicit legislative approval.

STATE EMPOWERMENT AND THE FUTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

One of the most defining aspects of Administrator Zeldin’s approach is the emphasis on state sovereignty in environmental regulation. By curtailing federal oversight, Zeldin aims to empower individual states to set their own environmental standards, tailored to local economic and ecological conditions. This decentralization marks a significant departure from the EPA’s historical role as a centralized authority enforcing nationwide standards. Supporters argue that states are better positioned to balance environmental protection with economic growth, while critics warn that this could lead to a patchwork of inconsistent regulations and weakened protections in regions with limited resources or political will.

States like Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming have already signaled support for Zeldin’s agenda, viewing it as an opportunity to revitalize fossil fuel industries and reduce regulatory burdens. Meanwhile, states such as California and New York are preparing legal and legislative countermeasures to maintain stricter environmental standards. This growing divide raises questions about the future of interstate environmental coordination and the potential for regulatory conflicts between jurisdictions.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE AND MARKET UNCERTAINTY

The private sector’s response to Zeldin’s reforms has been mixed. Traditional energy producers, including coal and natural gas companies, have welcomed the rollback of emissions

standards and reporting requirements, anticipating lower compliance costs and increased competitiveness. However, companies that have invested heavily in clean energy technologies and carbon reduction strategies are expressing concern over the potential loss of federal incentives and market stability.

Automakers, for example, face a complex landscape. While some manufacturers may benefit from relaxed emissions standards and reduced production costs, others worry about losing momentum in the transition to electric vehicles—a shift that has been driven in part by federal mandates and subsidies. The uncertainty surrounding future regulations complicates long-term investment decisions and could slow innovation in sustainable technologies.

Financial markets are also reacting to the changing regulatory environment. Analysts are closely monitoring the impact of Zeldin’s policies on energy prices, utility stocks, and green investment portfolios. The potential repeal of the Endangerment Finding and other climate-related regulations introduces volatility, as investors reassess risk exposure and reevaluate the viability of carbon-intensive assets.

A CROSSROADS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Lee Zeldin’s tenure at the EPA represents a pivotal moment in the agency’s history. His deregulatory agenda challenges the very foundation of federal climate policy and redefines the EPA’s role in safeguarding the environment. Whether these changes will endure depends on legal outcomes, scientific consensus, and political will.

KYMEA’S STRATEGIC POSITIONING

In this rapidly evolving landscape, KYMEA remains committed to delivering reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy to its member communities. The agency’s diversified energy portfolio and proactive planning strategies provide a strong foundation for navigating regulatory uncertainty. By investing in both traditional and renewable resources, KYMEA ensures operational flexibility and resilience, regardless of federal policy shifts.

The agency’s “least regrets” approach continues to guide decision-making, emphasizing adaptability and long-term value. As the EPA redefines its role, KYMEA will monitor developments closely, engage with stakeholders, and advocate for policies that support sustainable energy solutions and community well-being.

LOOKING AHEAD

The coming months will be critical in determining the trajectory of environmental policy in the United States. Legal challenges, congressional oversight, and public engagement will shape the outcome of Zeldin’s initiatives and influence the future of the EPA. For utilities, regulators, and communities alike, this moment represents both a challenge and an opportunity—to rethink priorities, reaffirm commitments, and chart a course toward a balanced and resilient energy future.



Ashwood Solar I: A Milestone in the Making

BY MICHELLE HIXON

The seed for Ashwood Solar I took root as part of KYMEA's broader mission to deliver cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable energy to its member communities. To advance that vision, on August 23, 2018, KYMEA entered into a 20-year contract with RWE Clean Energy for 100% of the projects output—86 megawatts of solar power from Lyon County, Kentucky.

The project was originally scheduled to come online on December 1, 2022, a timeline reflecting both the urgency and optimism of KYMEA's strategy to add renewables, creating a more diversified energy portfolio.

CHALLENGES: DELAYS AND DETERMINATION

Yet, like many major infrastructure projects of early 2020s, Ashwood encountered obstacles. The global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains, slowed construction timelines, and complicated labor availability. In addition, federal tariffs on photovoltaic (PV) modules created uncertainty in procurement and further delayed project execution.

What was meant to be a four-year journey stretched longer, but rather than retreat, KYMEA and RWE held steady. The organizations recommitted to the project, ensuring it would ultimately come to fruition.

GROUNDBREAKING — JULY 26, 2023

When the groundbreaking finally took place on July 26, 2023, it carried more than ceremonial weight—it symbolized resilience. Ashwood Solar I was set to become the largest solar project in Kentucky, featuring 226,000 bi-facial, fixed-tilt solar panels spanning 250 acres—designed for efficiency by capturing sunlight from both sides of the panels. The estimated annual production is nearly 170 million kilowatt-hours, enough to power over 15,000 homes.



CONSTRUCTION: MODULES, TRANSFORMERS, AND POLLINATOR HABITATS

The following months and years saw steady progress: panels installed row by row, a transformer delivered and set, and site operations brought to life. Alongside steel and silicon, ecological forethought was built in—pollinator-friendly plantings and bee hives were added to support the local pollinators. A herd of sheep also calls the farm home and helps keep the panels free of plant overgrowth.



ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Ashwood Solar I was more than power—it was prosperity. During construction, the project supported over 250 jobs, and over its lifetime, it will deliver an estimated \$6 million in state property tax revenue. For KYMEA's member communities, it represents affordable renewable energy, long-term stability, and an environmental commitment grounded in action.

COMMISSIONING AND RIBBON-CUTTING

Nearly seven years after the contract was signed, Ashwood Solar I reached the finish line. On June 25, 2025, KYMEA and RWE joined leaders, board members, and local officials at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate Ashwood's commissioning. For KYMEA, the event marked not only the commissioning of a power plant but the culmination of a vision dating back to 2018. As KYMEA President & CEO Doug Buresh reflected:





“This project reflects our long-term commitment to delivering clean, reliable, and cost-effective energy ... our 20-year partnership with RWE ensures that our members benefit from home-grown solar power while supporting local economic development and environmental stewardship.”

We are proud to add this clean, carbon-free, and economical resource to the Agency’s portfolio. Josh Callihan, Barbourville Utility Commission General Manager and Chairman of the KYMEA Board added: “This is a very important step in our plan to provide affordable energy to our customers in a very environmentally responsible manner. By working together, KYMEA and our member communities have shown that we can make solar energy cost effective.”

With operations underway, the project now delivers clean, homegrown energy to KYMEA’s 11 Member communities, forging a path towards resilient, affordable, renewable power.

A LEGACY IN POWER

Today, Ashwood Solar I shines as both an energy generator and a symbol of endurance. Conceived in 2018, delayed by global disruptions, and brought online in 2025, the project demonstrates the power of persistence, partnership, and purpose in achieving its goals.

It’s 250 acres of panels and pollinator fields will stand for decades, producing renewable energy, strengthening the Kentucky economy, and reminding future generations that the clean-energy transition is not without hurdles—but milestones like Ashwood are worth the wait.

To learn more about KYMEA’s Ashwood Solar I project, viisit our website at <https://www.kymea.org/power-resources/ashwood-solar-i/>



Important Dates

September

- 22nd BROC Mtg
- 22nd ECI Committee Mtg
- 25th Combined AR & Board Meeting

October

- 22nd ECI Committee Mtg
- 23rd Combined AR & Board Meeting

November

- 19th ECI Committee Mtg
- 19th Combined AR & Board Meeting



Carbon-Free Choice Program

Through the Carbon-Free Choice Program, customers in KYMEA All Requirements Communities can purchase carbon-free energy sourced from KYMEA solar and hydroelectric facilities. The carbon-free energy is sold in blocks per month where one block equal 1,000 kilowatt-hours.

Program Specifics

- The carbon-free energy is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- There are approximately 233,000 blocks available annually.
- Eligible customers, who are in good standing, purchase the blocks from their local municipal electric provider.
- The rate per block, per month, is subject to change through the rate setting process each July.
- Each block is certified and tracked using the M-RETS tracking system.
- Program participants will receive verification the carbon-free energy was utilized and retired on their behalf.
- Whole blocks must be purchased.
- Minimum participation term is one year.

Eligible KYMEA Communities

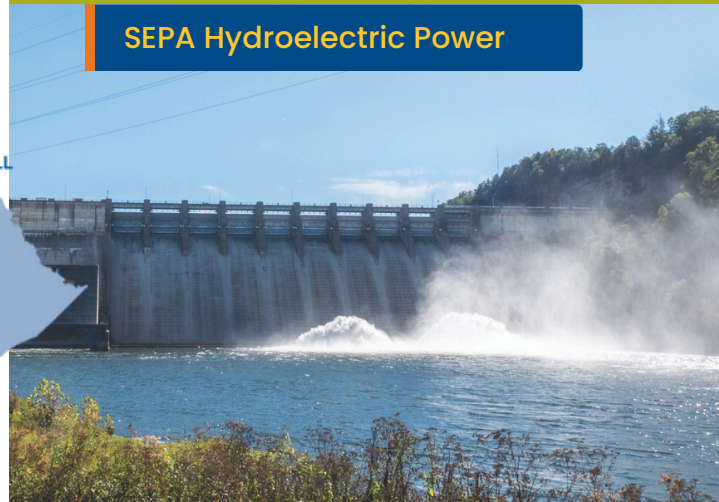


Carbon-Free Resources

Ashwood Solar I



SEPA Hydroelectric Power





ENERGY CENTER I UPDATE

Poor Site Conditions Slowed Progress in July

The site experienced historical rainfall in July that led to poor soil conditions. The Christman and Pollard teams developed a game plan to overcome the poor soil conditions, minimizing their impact on the project timeline.



Over Excavation Completed

The Pollard team has successfully removed the poor-quality soil found in the Engine Hall, Administration, and Electrical areas, replacing it with high-quality backfill.



Laydown Developed and Pilings Set

The laydown area has been developed, which will be used throughout the project as an equipment delivery and staging area.

Pilings have been set for the engine hall area. There are roughly 140 pilings that are secured into the rock 15 feet below.





Kentucky Municipal Energy Agency
 1700 Eastpoint Pkwy. Ste. 220
 Louisville, KY 40223

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contact@kymea.org