NORTH AMERICA

Rain Lily

A Brighter Tomorrow Starts Today

Solar Farm & Battery Storage Project Newsletter | **October 2026**



Welcome to the Rain Lily Solar & Storage Project Newsletter!

From Reclaimed Land to Habitat

When people picture a solar farm, they often picture bare ground and gravel. That's not the Rain Lily project. The site's history reflects a pattern of productive reuse: previously operated as a sand quarry, the land was reclaimed for grazing and is now set to take its next step forward. Beneath and around our panels, we're planning to establish native Texas grasses and wildflowers, creating habitat for pollinators, birds, and grazing wildlife for the 25+ year life of the project.

About Rain Lily Solar & Storage Project

Located on County Road 326, near Cleburne in Hood County, Texas, the Rain Lily Solar and Storage project is one of EE North America's key projects in ERCOT.

Development is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026. Construction is scheduled to start in 2027 with the first power being produced at the end of 2028.

At-a-glance



191 MWdc PV / 210 MWh BESS
installed capacity



377 GWh / year
annual production capacity



810 acres
of land



34,000+ Homes
powered each year



200,000+
metric tons of carbon emissions saved



2028
expected grid connection



24/7 Monitoring
of the energy storage system allows for rapid response, if needed



Meets or exceeds national safety codes and standards
rigorous testing ensures the project also meets multiple international safety certifications



Safety is of the utmost priority
from advanced system design to third-party validation to site layout, safety is built into the project

What We're Considering Planting

These species are not finalized. They represent potential options under consideration as part of a diversified native grasses and wildflower seed mix, with final selections to be guided by site-specific soil, drainage, and maintenance planning.[1]

Grasses (potential options)

- *Little Bluestem* — stabilizes soil, provides bird nesting cover
- *Sideoats Grama* — Texas's state grass; pollinator food source
- *Buffalograss* — drought-tolerant, low maintenance
- *Blue Grama*

Wildflowers (potential options)

- *Texas Bluebonnet*
- *Indian Blanket*
- *Black-Eyed Susan*
- *Butterfly Milkweed* — potential host plant for Monarch larvae
- *Purple Prairie Clover*



The general approach under consideration is sometimes called "low-impact solar": rather than mowed turf or gravel, the ground layer would be designed to reduce erosion, cut long-term maintenance, and function as habitat rather than a lawn. Panel shade can also moderate soil temperature, supporting a greater diversity of vegetation than open, unshaded ground, a dynamic documented at agrivoltaic sites such as North Carolina's Montgomery Sheep Farm.[2]

What Research Shows

Native vegetation under solar panels isn't just a nice idea. Independent research increasingly documents that it can boost insect and pollinator populations, support greater bird diversity, and improve soil and water conditions.



Insects and Pollinators

In a five-year study of two solar sites in Minnesota, researchers at Argonne National Laboratory and NREL found that after native grasses and wildflowers were established, total insect abundance tripled, and native bee populations increased twentyfold.[3] A separate peer-reviewed UK study across 15 solar parks recorded roughly 1,400 pollinators spanning more than 30 species in a single summer.[4]

Birds

A 2025 study published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* found that 10 of 13 grassland bird species studied showed a greater likelihood of occupying solar sites than paired control sites nearby.[5] Research from the RSPB and University of Cambridge similarly found that solar farms managed with wildlife in mind held nearly three times as many bird species as surrounding arable farmland.[6]

Farmers and Land Use

Native plantings under and around panels can also support grazing, an established and growing practice known as solar grazing, documented in more than 20 states.[7] For landowners, hosting solar has also proven to be a financial stabilizer during difficult years.[8]

Closer to home: Research from the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Vernon has found that solar panel shading reduces soil water evaporation and plant transpiration, an advantage during Texas's hot, dry summers, while also easing heat stress for grazing livestock beneath the panels.[9]

Voices from the Field

Perspectives on solar and land stewardship, from right here in Texas to solar sites around the world.

Texas

"Strategic management of vegetation under the arrays, such as the restoration of native vegetation or planting pollinator-friendly species, can have a positive impact on biodiversity."

— Dr. Nuria Gomez-Casanovas, Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Vernon[9]

"Restoring native vegetation is one of the most effective ways to improve the ecological health of previously disturbed lands. Replacing non-native pasture grasses with native plant communities can provide valuable habitat, support pollinators and birds, and enhance biodiversity for years to come."

— Sara Rudokas, Senior Biologist, ICF

United States

"We're seeing sometimes a three-fold increase in pollinators. We're seeing three times the amount of birds and bees, bats, butterflies."

— Stacy Peterson, Energy Program Director, NCAT AgriSolar Clearinghouse[10]

"Solar is inexpensive, it's easy to put almost anywhere, and it makes an ideal place where agriculture can also thrive if you plan early in the design and layout phase."

— Joel Olsen, Solar Developer & Owner, Montgomery Sheep Farm (North Carolina)[2]

"People are seeing the benefits of agrivoltaics. Companies are seeing what these benefits are, farmers are seeing what these benefits are, and they're recognizing, 'Hey, this might be for me.' And so they're testing it out. That's very exciting for agrivoltaics research."

— Jordan Macknick, Lead, InSPIRE Project, National Renewable Energy Laboratory[11]

"It wasn't a scary picture that everybody likes to paint about solar and the loss of farmland... It was our saving grace."

— Wayne Greier, Sixth-Generation Farmer, Ohio[8]

International

"Solar parks could offer unique opportunities to enhance the local environment and benefit biodiversity, with implications for ecosystem components such as pollinators."

— Hollie Blaydes, Pollinator Researcher, University of Reading / Lancaster University (United Kingdom)[4]

"Solar farms are mostly built in rural areas. This has raised concerns about a potential decline in both agricultural production and wildlife habitat. But there are ways to expand solar infrastructure so both nature and people win."

— Dr. Eric J. Nordberg, Senior Lecturer, Applied Ecology & Landscape Management, University of New England (Australia)[12]

Environmental FAQ

What happens to the land under and around the solar panels? Will it be maintained?

Yes. The land underneath and surrounding the solar panels will be maintained using best practices such as native grass seeding and rotational mowing. We are exploring options for habitat restoration and pollinator-friendly ground cover to support biodiversity.

What measures are in place to protect local wildlife?

The project includes comprehensive wildlife protection measures such as establishing buffer zones around sensitive areas, adjusting construction timelines to avoid critical seasons, and preserving existing habitat. These steps follow environmental best practices and regulatory guidelines, ensuring we minimize disruption and support biodiversity throughout the project's lifecycle.

How are water resources being protected?

The project prioritizes water resource protection by avoiding jurisdictional waterways, implementing erosion control measures, and ensuring sustainable land management practices.

Footnotes & Sources

1. Native American Seed, Bamert Seed Co., Turner Seed: Texas native seed mix specifications (reference only; final Rain Lily seed mix not yet determined) — seedsource.com
2. PBS North Carolina, *State of Change*: "How Sheep Make Solar Energy Production Easier," featuring mJoel Olsen, Montgomery Sheep Farm — pbs.org
3. Argonne National Laboratory / NREL: "Insect populations flourish in the restored habitats of solar energy facilities" (2024) — anl.gov
4. Blaydes, H. et al., "Opportunities to enhance pollinator biodiversity in solar parks," *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* (2021), University of Reading / Lancaster University
5. Walston, L. et al., "Ecovoltaic solar energy development can promote grassland bird communities," *Journal of Applied Ecology* (2025)
6. RSPB / University of Cambridge, Centre for Landscape Regeneration: "Solar farms managed for nature can boost bird numbers and biodiversity"
7. Cornell University Atkinson Center: Solar Grazing Research Program — blogs.cornell.edu/grazing
8. Associated Press: "Hosting solar can be a lifeline for farmers. But overcoming local opposition is tough" (2026)
9. Texas A&M AgriLife Today: "Putting the 'Farm' in Solar Farm," featuring Dr. Nuria Gomez-Casanovas (2023) — agrilifetoday.tamu.edu; Gomez-Casanovas et al., *Cell Reports Physical Science* (2023)
10. CBS News, "CBS Saturday Morning": "How 'solar grazing' is creating a new industry," featuring Stacy Peterson, NCAT AgriSolar Clearinghouse (2023)
11. U.S. Department of Energy / NREL: "Lighting the Way for Agrivoltaics: How NREL Empowers Communities To Capture the Benefits of Solar Energy, Agriculture, and Ecosystems," featuring Jordan Macknick, Lead, InSPIRE Project (2024)
12. Nordberg, E.J. & Schwarzkopf, L., "Developing conservoltaic systems to support biodiversity on solar farms," *Austral Ecology* (2023); Nordberg, E.J., *pv magazine Australia* (2023)

An invitation

Have questions or want to learn more? Reach out—we'd love to connect!
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