

From peanuts to panels, President Carter leases 10-acre site for solar

February 9, 2017 – The former peanut farmer turned president from Plains wanted to help harvest a new crop in retirement – solar energy. As such, former President Jimmy Carter, a longtime renewable energy advocate, worked with Atlanta-based SolAmerica to lease a 10-acre site in his hometown to develop a 1.3 MW solar project as part of Georgia Power’s innovative Advanced Solar Initiative (ASI).



The Plains facility is one of several hundred projects that now make up more than 735 MW of “ASI” solar facilities contracted for across the state since the launch of the original ASI in 2012, and a subsequent expansion called ASI Prime launched in 2013.

The project was dedicated after the former president made comments along with other dignitaries in attendance at a ribbon-cutting event on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2017. He and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter cut the ribbon to formally open the facility. “We just turn the corner, and we can see it,” Carter said. “Every time Rosalynn and I walk down the street, we look over to see that (the solar panels) are tracking well.”

According to reports from the CEO of solar developer Sol America, Carter is famously hands-on, and solar farms are no exception for the 92 year-old. During construction Carter was said to visit the site frequently, one day studying plans spread out in a pickup truck bed. The president, who attended Georgia Tech and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in the 1940s, was said to ask “very smart questions.”

Jem Morris, Georgia Power’s West Region Area Manager for Americus, spoke at the ceremony as well, saying, “We are honored to share a stage with President Carter, and we are pleased to see yet another solar farm in the state as part of our Advanced Solar Initiative.”

In addition, Morris shared updates on the company’s renewable efforts, including solar capacity expansions spurred by Georgia Power programs under the state’s constructive regulatory climate, which has created one of the fastest growing and most competitive solar markets in the nation.

Operating under a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Georgia Power, the Plains project should produce power for years to come.

Along with the company’s other solar initiatives, including solar facilities on five Georgia military bases, Georgia Power added more than 2 million solar panels to the state’s energy landscape through its various programs last year. In total, the company now counts 846 MW of solar energy resources in operation, with accelerating growth year over year since 2013. Georgia Power continues to have the largest voluntary renewable portfolio in the nation.

The company will continue this growth in 2017 with the implementation of the Renewable Energy Development Initiative (REDI), approved by the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) in 2016. Along with other solar projects and programs, Georgia Power expects to add up to 1,600 MW of additional renewable energy by 2021.