



## News Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Grazing sheep provide cost-effective, ecologically friendly service for the Flint Hills Resources' solar complex**

*The natural vegetation management solution builds on the site's nationally recognized legacy of habitat management and enhances the largest-of-its kind solar complex*

**Rosemount, Minn.** – The daily choir of bird calls and animal sounds heard throughout the grasslands within the solar complex near the Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery will have a new voice over the next few weeks. More than 500 grazing sheep will chart a course across the landscape, enthusiastically eating invasive plants and overgrown vegetation from around the solar panels, naturally promoting the healthy growth of native and pollinator-friendly plants at the same time.

The sheep, many with young lambs, brought their appetites to Rosemount as they were unloaded at the solar site on Wednesday afternoon and quickly dove into their work. The sheep will make their way across different areas of the solar site this summer before returning to their home farm in Caledonia, Minn.

“Grazing sheep provide an ecologically friendly solution for managing vegetation growth in and around our solar panels and infrastructure,” said Alex Williams, Flint Hills Resources facility manager. “A natural landscape maintenance solution like grazing sheep is a reflection of our focus on environmental stewardship and our legacy of restoring and maintaining pristine habitat to support pollinators and other wildlife.”

In 2022, Flint Hills Resources completed construction on its 120,000-panel solar installation, occupying approximately 350 acres adjacent to the company's Pine Bend refinery. The solar project is the largest of its kind in the nation – all the power is generated on site and directly consumed by a single company. Most large solar projects are built by electric utilities to

supply the grid and are funded by ratepayers. The combination of energy generated at this solar site and Flint Hills Resources' state-of-the-art, highly efficient combined heat and power system provides as much as 70% of the power needs for the Pine Bend refinery. The refinery is currently considered one of the nation's most energy efficient facilities, having earned EPA Energy Star status five consecutive years.

In addition to providing reliable, lower cost power, the solar complex also provided an ideal opportunity for Flint Hills to expand its habitat management program. Native and pollinator-friendly plants and vegetation grow throughout the solar site and grazing sheep will support the continued health of those plants, which benefit from the periodic disturbance the sheep provide. Their hooves aerate compacted dirt, their droppings recycle nutrients through the soil, and by eating invasive and weedy vegetation, the sheep create advantages to native and pollinator-friendly plants later in the season.

Stretching beyond the edges of the solar complex and overseen in collaboration with Friends of the Mississippi River, the Flint Hills habitat management program includes the nearby Pine Bend Bluffs natural area, a living example of Flint Hills' dedication to conservation and environmental stewardship along the west bend of the Mississippi River. Conservation efforts throughout the Pine Bend refinery campus and at the Pine Bend Bluffs natural area have earned gold certification from the Wildlife Habitat Council (now combined with the World Environment Center and known as Tandem Global), making it the only current gold-certified site in Minnesota and the first ever in the Twin Cities metro area.

These sheep are the latest – but not the first – hungry herbivores to be brought in to assist Flint Hills with landscape and habitat management. In 2013, a cadre of goats set out across the Pine Bend Bluffs to indulge their appetites and graze down vegetation throughout the site. Similarly, grazing horses have been part of the vegetation management approach at Pine Bend in the past.

### **About Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery**

The [Flint Hills Resources](#) Pine Bend refinery produces transportation fuels used throughout the Midwest, including most of Minnesota's gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel, as well as other products people rely on such as propane and asphalt. Located 17 miles southeast of Minneapolis, Pine Bend has a refining capacity of 375,000 barrels per day and is among the most efficient oil refineries in the country. Flint Hills Resources directly and indirectly supports more than 4,000 Minnesota jobs and has invested nearly \$1.7 billion in upgrades and improvements to its Minnesota facilities since 2010. With more than 1,000 full-time employees, the Flint Hills Resources Pine Bend refinery is one of the largest employers in Dakota County. More information about the Pine Bend refinery is available at [PineBendRefinery.com](#).

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