

Virtual Stakeholder Engagement Strategies

Author, K, PITERA P.E.¹

1DNV, Denver, CO

BACKGROUND

When developing a project, it is vital to identify key project stakeholders to consult and educate them about the project objectives, impacts, and opportunities. Effective early and frequent stakeholder engagement can transform potential project opponents into project allies. This is magnified for offshore wind projects due to the geographic reach across miles of coastline, unique impacts, and novel technology.

Virtual stakeholder engagement became normal operating procedure for renewable energy development during the Covid-19 pandemic – but as we return to in-person open houses, are these virtual engagement strategies still relevant?

CONSIDERATIONS

There are several key considerations for virtual stakeholder engagement for offshore wind:

- Number of stakeholders
- Wide variety of stakeholder priorities
- Geographical dispersion of stakeholder groups across miles of coastline and onshore transmission route.
- Tribal outreach
- Longer project development timelines
- Consistency and timeliness of information sharing
- Cost

IMPLEMENTATION

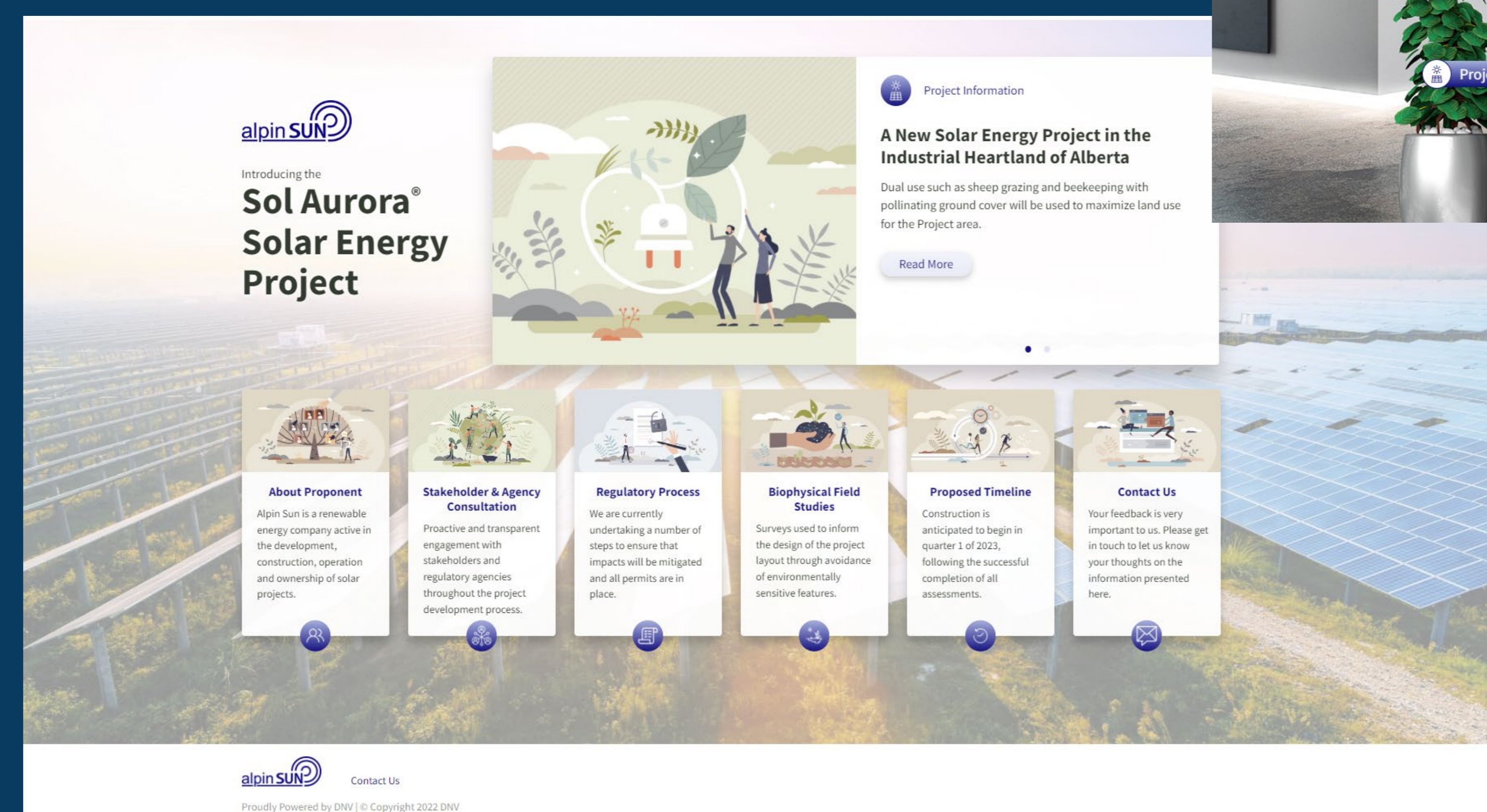
Offshore wind projects have a variety of stakeholders from agencies, NGOs, fisheries, Tribes, ocean users, and more. The number of groups is not the only challenge, but the dispersion of stakeholder groups across miles of coastline and along transmission line routes, from construction and operations impacts can be difficult to address. Finally, these groups can have competing priorities.

A virtual online platform can be an effective solution as a central location for stakeholder engagement with consistent and up to date communications across all groups. It is a supplementary tool to the BOEM-required stakeholder engagement plans for fisheries, agencies, and Tribes. Costs of virtual platforms are relatively low and can be adapted as the Project progresses through development into construction and operations.

Virtual stakeholder engagement can include many options:

- Comprehensive project website including project details, environmental due diligence, contact forms, etc.
- Virtual open house simulation
- Opportunity for stakeholder surveys or input platform
- Host site for visual simulations
- Highlight of engagement activities performed and planned

Note for Stakeholder Identification: Tribes located nearest to the Project site and cabling route may not be the only parties to consider. There may also be tribes who were formerly in proximity to the project sites that were forcibly or voluntarily relocated.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Alpin Sun – examples shown are past virtual open house and websites provided by DNV.



CONCLUSIONS

DNV believes that thoughtful, clear, and early stakeholder engagement can positively impact a projects' development. Creating an inclusive overarching strategy which includes a virtual engagement platform to be utilized with agency, fisheries, and Tribal communication strategies, will improve information accessibility and consistency of communications across all involved parties and provide a holistic point of view.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information, please contact:

Kellie Pitera, P.E.
Team Lead, Environmental and Permitting Services
DNV Energy USA Inc.
kellie.pitera@dnv.com

Jackie Hanberg
Director, Environmental and Permitting Services
DNV Energy USA Inc.
jackie.hanberg@dnv.com