

From: [Puco ContactOPSB](#)
To: [Puco Docketing](#)
Subject: public comment: 18-1024, 18-1334, 20-1288, 20-1814, 21-0005, 21-0041
Date: Thursday, May 6, 2021 4:43:16 PM

This is a public comment on the solar farms being built in Highland County, Ohio. Currently there are six projects covering several thousand acres in our county alone. These farms are being built on private land through leases with domestic and foreign companies for terms longer than 10 years. I would like to note that I am an educator and a biologist and also own land in Highland County near the town of Lynchburg, Ohio. I have many years of experience as a professional and hold a graduate degree. The below comment is informed with my formal training, my informal observations, and my opinion as a long time resident.

I support green technology. I think it is one of the best technologies we have invented to combat climate change. It will lower our dependence on fossil fuels and still provide our society with the energy we need to continue to progress as a society. But it is not without its drawbacks. My concerns are three-fold: damage to the local environment, negative impacts on local wildlife and property value decline. I also have a solution to combat all of these issues: require these solar farms build green boundaries between the farm and other properties, require a certain amount of green corridors be preserved or installed per acre and put a limit on how many acres per square mile can be developed into solar farms.

According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and OPSB, the companies building these farms are required to adhere to certain standards of operation that mitigate negative impacts to the environment during the construction phase only. It is my understanding that currently, there are no regulations or recommendations as far as the long term effects of solar farm operations because there is no long term data collected showing how these solar farms impact the environment in Ohio. However, there are well-known studies from other parts of the world that should serve as examples as to what impacts these large farms are likely to have on Ohio's environment. "Environmental effects, such as soil erosion, changes in water use, and increases in local temperature, are well documented (Barron-Gafford et al., [2016](#); Hernandez et al., [2014](#); Moore-O'Leary et al., [2017](#)). A few studies suggest that solar facilities could affect wildlife through exclusionary fencing, habitat destruction or alteration, and direct mortality (Table [1](#); Northrup & Wittemyer, [2013](#); Walston, Rollins, LaGory, Smith, & Meyers, [2016](#))...(Chock, 2020)" Birds, bats, amphibians, reptiles, insects and other mammals have all been negatively impacted due to large solar arrays (Chock, 2020). These impacts include impact trauma, electrocution, drowning, entrapment and other various mortalities. Introducing regulations such as limiting solar farm saturation in an area and building green corridors will reduce the incident of wildlife trauma.

Installing large solar farms in wide swaths throughout our county will cause habitat loss and habitat fragmentation, neither of which is good for wildlife in our area. Studies on habitat fragmentation have presented, "...strong evidence that habitat loss has large, consistently negative effects on biodiversity. (Fahrig, 2003)" It is not sufficient to wait until scientists have collected enough data to prove that solar farms lead to habitat loss in Ohio. It is more prudent to prevent this habitat loss by placing caps on how many acres of solar farms are permitted per area and requiring green corridors at minimum intervals. Green corridors have been used in urban areas to mitigate habitat loss and support wildlife migration with great success. "Green corridors are an attempt to mitigate negative effects of the built

environment of cities and towns. The corridors act as conservation for rapidly extreme intervention and development of the urban environment. Most importantly, it enables dispersal movement of animals within city areas. (Aziz, 2014)” Requiring their creation here with the installation of solar farms is appropriate to lessen the impact on wildlife in our area.

As a homeowner, I am concerned that my property value will decline should a solar farm be installed within eyesight of my home. While I completely understand the draw for other landowners to lease their land to solar farms for financial gain, I do not think that the construction of solar farms should be permitted if it negatively impacts everyone else's financial health. In solar installations in the northeast, other homeowners voiced similar opinions. Research has shown that the construction of green borders has nearly reversed any negative impact solar farms may have had on their property value. “In just about all cases, the concern can usually be resolved with decent visual shielding — arborvitae or cedar that will grow tall enough to block the sightline from peoples' homes. (Prevost, 2020)”

The current influx of solar farms into Highland County is moving at a rate that is, in my professional opinion, alarming. Green technology must be implemented in a responsible way. Lessening the likelihood of negative impacts on our environment, the wildlife that live amongst us and the financial health of all the residents of Highland County should be a major concern for all involved and one that is considered BEFORE the construction of these farms, not after problems arise. By limiting the number of acres that are developed into solar farms in our county, requiring approved projects to maintain green corridors and green borders to support wildlife and preserve the property values of surrounding homes, we will lead our community into the future with green technology in the most responsible way possible.

References

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This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on

5/6/2021 4:52:51 PM

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Case No(s). 18-1024-EL-BGN, 18-1334-EL-BGN, 20-1288-EL-BGN, 20-1814-EL-BGN, 21-0005-EL-BGA

Summary: Public Comment of Jessica Neumann, via website, electronically filed by Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing