

FAX

Case # 21-117-EL-BGN

**In the Matter of the Application of EL-BGN Kingwood Solar I LLC  
for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need**

February 28, 2022

5 pages including transmission page

Testimony of Tecumseh Land Preservation Association  
given by Michele Burns, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 417 Yellow Springs, OH 45387

Charles Swaney, Attorney at Law, 937-207-5297

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**BEFORE THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD**

<b>In the Matter of the Application of</b>	)	<b>Case No 21-0117-EL-</b>
<b>BGN Kingwood Solar I LLC</b>	)	
<b>for a Certificate of Environmental</b>	)	<b>SUBMISSION OF DIRECT</b>
<b>Compatibility and Public Need</b>	)	<b>TESTIMONY</b>
	)	<b>TO APPLICATION</b>

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**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF MICHELE  
BURNS FOR TECUMSEH LAND  
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**

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1 Q-1 Please state your name, title and business address.

2 A-1 My name is Michele Burns. I am the chair of the Executive Director of Tecumseh  
3 Land Preservation Association d/b/a Tecumseh Land Trust. The office is located at 4633  
4 US 68 N Yellow Springs, Greene County, Ohio. The mailing address is P.O. Box 417  
5 Yellow Springs, OH 45387.

6 Q-2 What is your educational and professional background?

7 A-2 I graduated from the University of Kentucky with a B.S. in Natural Resource  
8 Management and received an M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Colorado State  
9 University. I have worked for Tecumseh Land Trust for 13 years.

10 Q-3 On whose behalf are you offering testimony?

11 A-3 I am testifying on behalf of the Tecumseh Land Preservation Association.

12 Q-4 What is the Tecumseh Land Preservation Association?

13 A-4 The Tecumseh Land Preservation Association is a nonprofit organization with a  
14 mission is to preserve farmland, water, and natural areas forever. Since 1990, we have  
15 protected over 34,000 acres of land in our service area using conservation easements. In  
16 the three townships where the Kingwood Solar Array is proposed we hold easements on  
17 6,237 acres, including the 1,000 acre Glen Helen Nature Preserve and several farms that  
18 are adjacent to the proposed development.

19 Q-5 Has Tecumseh Land Preservation Association taken a position on the Kingwood Solar

19 Q-5 Has Tecumseh Land Preservation Association taken a position on the Kingwood Solar  
20 project ("Project")?

21 A-4 No. However we do have concerns about the Project.

22 Q-5 What concerns does the Tecumseh Land Preservation Association have about the Project?

23 A-5 Because we are in the business of protecting prime farmland, our interests in this  
24 large scale solar array center around impacts to prime soils and farmland productivity, and  
25 the short and long term impacts to the important agricultural economy of both Ohio and  
26 Greene County.

27 At the public hearing, we heard a lot about community members' connections to and  
28 relationships with the land being affected by the proposed development. I want to take a  
29 step back to put this into a global perspective. Prime soils are hugely important to global  
30 food supplies. Prime soil farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is  
31 land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing  
32 food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. There are only  
33 four areas in the world, consisting of about 3% of the Earth's surface, that contain prime  
34 soils: the Ukraine, China, Brazil into Argentina, and the U.S. Corn Belt. Within the U.S.  
35 Corn Belt, the four largest states with prime soils are Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, and Ohio.  
36 And within Ohio, prime soils exist primarily in the western half of the state. Ohio has  
37 13,600,000 acres of farmland, 44% of which is considered prime soils. Approximately  
38 98% of the project area is classified by the USDA as prime or locally important soils. On  
39 such a small portion of the Earth, we are expected to grow enough food to feed a growing  
40 population. According to a 2013 United Nations report, we will need to grow 70% more  
41 food to meet population demand by 2050. Proponents of these solar arrays say they are  
42 only taking 1% of Ohio's farmland out of production. That amounts to 136,000 acres.  
43 That is 1% from Ohio that disproportionally impacts the 3% the world has available. This  
44 doesn't account for the amount of land we are losing to other developments. According to  
45 the American Farmland Trust, Ohio is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation for farmland conversion  
46 for a total loss of 312,000 acres between 2001-2016. These solar array projects, if taking  
47 1%, would convert over 40% of what was lost in 15 years. In an area, such as ours, with  
48 abundant clean water and prime soils, every threat to those resources should be taken  
49 extremely seriously and the benefits, if any, of impacting those resources should be

carefully and seriously considered. In fact, Governor Voinovich created the Ohio Farmland Preservation Task Force through executive order to address conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. This is why land trusts exist across the state and across the country – to help preserve in perpetuity prime soils, natural habitat, and clean water. We also heard a lot at the public hearing about the economics of farming. Agriculture represents Ohio's #1 industry. I estimate, based on average yields and current commodity prices, that the now 1,200 acres, more or less, taken out of production for the Kingwood Solar project will come at a cost to the commodity market alone of approximately \$1 million annually. This does not include other economic losses such as employment, support services, and sales. To better understand how productive these farms will be, if and when, the solar arrays are removed, we can look to productivity changes in land where gas pipelines have been installed primarily in the north and eastern parts of Ohio. The Ohio State University has begun to study these impacts. Their preliminary research has shown "on average, corn grain yields decreased an average of 23.8%, silage corn decreased an average of 28.8%, and soybean yields decreased an average of 7.4% over the pipeline compared with adjacent areas. Further, soils within the pipeline area had more rock fragments, lower soil moisture, and had a higher resistance to penetration which indicates lasting forms of soil compaction." Development threats of all types, including utility scale solar arrays could impact our ability to grow food and the agricultural industry over the course of the lease period and beyond.

Q-6 Do you support the County's and Townships' land use planning efforts?

A-6 Yes. Preserving land is our mission and we do this in conjunction with current county land use plans. We work closely with the Greene County Commissioners, Greene County Regional Planning, and the townships. We strive to implement the farmland preservation efforts for the Commissioners by protecting land that they have identified for preservation. Greene County has made farmland preservation a priority since the 1970s. The Land Trust fully supports the Commissioner's Amendment 2021-01 to the Perspectives 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. In this amendment the Commissioners specifically address the need to preserve prime farmland and set policies in order to accomplish this goal with regard to large scale utilities. Tecumseh Land Trust supports the policies set forth in the Amendment and more specifically the policy that the

81 footprint of utilities be limited, and that setbacks must be established from floodplains, the  
82 Little Miami River, wetlands, and cultural, historic and recreational viewsheds. The  
83 abundant natural, historic, and agricultural resources that make Greene County vibrant  
84 should be heavily considered when siting these large scale utilities. Local planning and  
85 resources of local importance should also weigh heavily into these considerations. The  
86 Land Trust greatly values and supports these local planning processes, and strongly urges  
87 that they be respected.

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**In**

**Case No(s). 21-0117-EL-BGN**

**Summary: Testimony Direct Testimony of Michele Burns electronically filed by Mr.  
Charles D. Swaney on behalf of Tecumseh Land Preservation Association.**