



Case Number 19-1881-EL-BGN – Madison Fields Solar Project

Cathy Cowan Becker

On behalf of Simply Living in conjunction with the Ohio Sustainable Business Council

Ohio Power Siting Board

December 3, 2020

Administrative Judges Addison and Sandor, and members of the Ohio Power Siting Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Cathy Cowan Becker, and I am testifying on behalf of Simply Living, a community organization that promotes sustainability, environmental awareness and our local economy through educational outreach and partnerships. Simply Living works in conjunction with the Ohio Sustainable Business Council, a statewide coalition of businesses and business networks committed to public policies at the local, state, and federal levels that support a vibrant, just, and sustainable economy.

Both Simply Living and the Ohio Sustainable Business Council strongly support the Madison Fields Solar Project. This project would provide 180 MW of solar energy in Madison County. This is enough electricity to power 34,000 homes.

As you may know, the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) has said that we must [cut carbon emissions](#) 45% by 2030 and to zero by 2050 if we want to a livable planet. Ohio is the sixth-highest carbon emitting state, so our share of these emissions is significant. We must move Ohio to a clean energy economy, and projects like Madison Fields will help us get there.

If approved, the project will offset 31,500 tons of carbon emissions each year, equal to planting over 741,100 trees (almost 1500 acres) or removing 5,581 cars from the road each year. Over the 30-year life span of the project, Madison Fields will avert 945,000 tons of carbon emissions, equal to planting 22 million trees on 45,000 acres or taking 167,000 cars off the road.

Poll after poll has found widespread support for renewable energy in Ohio. A [March 2018 poll](#) found that 7 in 10 Ohio voters favored a goal of generating 100 percent of the state's electricity using clean and renewable sources like solar and wind by 2030. A [February 2019 poll](#) found that two-thirds of Ohio conservatives believe the state should generate at least half of its energy from renewable sources.. And an [October 2019 poll](#) found that nearly two-thirds of Ohio voters said developing renewable energy is the most important strategy to address Ohio's energy needs.

Part of the charge of Simply Living and the Ohio Sustainable Business Council is to promote the local economy. There's nothing more important to that than locally generated power, and the Madison Fields Solar Project is a win-win for the local community.

Construction of the solar farm would inject over \$30 million into the Madison County economy directly and over \$8 million indirectly, for a total investment of \$38 million in Madison County. In Ohio as a whole, those figures are over \$41 million in direct expenditures and over \$55 million in indirect expenditures, for a total of over \$97 million in the statewide economy.

The project would also create jobs -- 477 direct construction jobs and 113 indirect jobs in Madison County, and 627 direct and 808 indirect jobs across Ohio.

A recent [study from Ohio University](#) points to the importance of utility scale solar in Ohio. If Ohio was to aggressively move into a clean energy economy, it could create over 54,000 construction jobs, generate over \$9.6 billion in economic impacts, and generate \$2.7 billion in tax revenues. These are much-needed dollars that local communities can use for schools, fire departments, infrastructure, and other necessary expenses.

One common question about utility scale solar projects is the environmental impact. An entire body of life-cycle analysis research finds that solar and wind energy has a [significantly lower](#) environmental footprint than fossil fuel projects like mining, drilling, and fracking. Further, solar panels are compatible with other forms of conservation, such as native plants, pollinators, and even a [sheep farm](#). Madison Fields is working with the county Soil and Water agency to plant native grasses on site. When the project is at the end of its life span, the solar panels can be reused, recycled, or disposed, and the land can be restored to its original condition.

For all of these reasons, Simply Living and the Ohio Sustainable Business Council supports the Madison Fields Solar Project, and we urge you to approve it. Thank you, and I'll be happy to take any questions.

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