

**From:** [Matthew Butler](#)  
**To:** [Puco Docketing](#)  
**Subject:** public comment for 20-1605-EL-BGN [ ref:\_00Dt0GzXt.\_500t0dq84B:ref ]  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 23, 2020 9:19:23 AM

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Ohio Power Siting Board members,

Please consider these thoughts as they pertain to the application for the Birch Solar project. I was raised and currently reside in the southern part of Shawnee Township, Allen County, Ohio. I have a great respect for the rich soil that has been farmed in this area. Our fields and gardens have produced top quality yields for generations. I am not alone in being completely surprised the last week of October when I learned of the Birch Solar project. I was disappointed to learn from several close farmer friends that initially, there was 2100 acres of prime farm land already under contract. A contract that evidently kept them from discussing it with neighbors. These farmers knew about it and had time to research and negotiate for a year before the local public was informed. Lightsourcebp has repeatedly said that our community wants this, but that is not the case. The project now includes 2600 acres. Initially, the relational stress on long time farm family and friends was and still is a huge concern for myself and others in the community; but the size, scope, uncertainties and negative impacts to our community from this industrial project have quickly broadened my concerns. We will be made to live "in it" without any benefit whatsoever!

The questions come fast and they keep adding up. Why so many solar projects in western Ohio? Why so fast? In spite of the efforts to inform the public of their intentions, Lightsourcebp has yet to convince the residents of this area that this is a good investment. They make it seem as if it is too good to be true; aesthetically, energy wise and financially (and you know what they say about that). I have attended the meetings, read the articles, asked questions on both sides of this, kept a level head and tried to understand the reasons....and I only come up with one; money... and it is so very sad.

The board lists eight criteria in considering applications for solar energy. Without rewriting them, I would like to list some comments in note form. 1. States probable environmental impact. Defined how? Solar arrays and fences most definitely change the environment in many ways. 2. Minimum adverse environmental impact. What is maximum? We already have an 1,100 acre refinery in our community making a huge impact on the environment. Whose pollution may coat the panels like it does our windshields. 5. Facility will comply. Not so as seen by previous projects under Kevin Smith's leadership. ...no confidence there. Why would Ohio consider a European company? Where is the long term (25-35 yrs) experience that supports this point? 6. Besides the 4 local employees to oversee it and the 10 or so farmers leasing their land for top dollar per acre, how does 1800 acres of solar arrays serve the public interest, convenience and necessity? If convenience refers to the nearby substation, there are plenty of those in lesser populated areas. Or the convenience for Lightsourcebp to come in on cleared, level farm land? Where are the studies that support the necessity for 5000+ MW (375mw for Birch) needed in Ohio...all in 3 years and adding still? Would Ohio seek this out if our government wasn't pushing hard for green energy? I understand the proposed monies for schools and the county but where is the assurance that this won't go bankrupt and leave an industrial wasteland? Or more likely, sold to another company that doesn't have to follow through. The decommissioning bond information is very vague. What to do with industrial waste is already a problem...where will it all go? 7. Impact on continued agricultural viability of land in existing ag. district. Say what you will but, 'harvesting' solar is not ag. Under no definition of agriculture is solar found. Why is Ohio so eager to put thousands of acres of successful farm land out of food production? It isn't even mainly sunny here! Why are you making it so easy for these companies? At least make them use the brown and gray lands we

have. And what about all the acres Ohio has in land preservation programs? Ag viability means productive farming. Keeping the land in agriculture and stewarding the land to remain productive into the future. Where is the data that says land sitting (even if mowed or grazed) for 35 yrs can go right back into viable farm land? It can't! Our township will lose what it lends also by way of country aesthetics and undisturbed wildlife. 8. Does not read as a sound commitment to solving the various water issues that are sure to accompany acres of arrays. What if the water conservation practices are not feasible or economical? We only have a limited amount of potable water. Want to think green?...take care of the water first. Many of us have wells. And flooding... How does lightsourcebp propose to address such issues during the life of the project?


I have listened to the basic answers from lightsourcebp to many of these questions. I am also aware that other communities have had and are having negative issues from nearby solar facilities. Why not limit these projects to 5,10, or 15 years in order to at least see if your decisions prove fruitful for Ohio. Have you seen fit to decline any applications yet? If not, why?

Please step back and consider the big picture for Ohio. We love our state and community. Just because there is pressure to add green energy, Ohio does not need to jump feet first into years of commitments that are not guaranteed to meet their claims. You, as a board representing Ohio, have a big responsibility to protect Ohio's energy endeavors. There ARE other options. Please stand up for Ohio's farm land for food and fiber production. ( Yes, I am aware of the solar grazing programs and have raised sheep for 20 years. This is the one positive thing that seems to fit with solar arrays.)

I had one farmer ask me ' besides the eye sore and depreciation of your property, what concerns you about this?' I am still shaking my head. It is not right that so few can make a choice that will affect so many under the radar. Just because it can be done, doesn't make it right. You must be aware of how very difficult it is for a community to gather the knowledge and resources to fight against such a large industry as this.

|From what I understand, there is no stopping the growth of these solar projects...as I write this, other companies and land owners nearby are seeking to gain from further industrialization of these lands. Won't you consider your authority to check this and decline the Lightsourcebp Birch Solar project application?

Thank you,

Sarah Norris 

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Summary: Public Comment of Sarah Norris, via website, electronically filed by Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing