

**BEFORE
THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD**

In the Matter of the Application of **Union Ridge**)
Solar, LLC for a Certificate of Environmental)
Compatibility and Public Need for a Solar) Case No. 20-1757-EL-BGN
Facility Located in Licking County, Ohio.)

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF

JORDAN ROFKAR

on behalf of

Union Ridge Solar, LLC

September 2, 2021

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

A-1. My name is Jordan Rofkar. I am the Ecology and Wetlands Practice Leader at Hull & Associates, LLC. ("Hull"). My business address is 219 South Erie Street, Toledo, Ohio 43604.

Q.2 What are your duties as a Practice Leader?

A-2. As the Ecology and Wetlands Practice Leader, I manage surface water delineation, Clean Water Act permitting, threatened and endangered species, and ecological restoration projects in multiple states developing effective strategies to protect natural resources and meet regulatory requirements. I work closely with multi-disciplinary teams at Hull, interact with local and state agencies, and lead permitting efforts at a variety of energy, industrial, and restoration sites. I also manage a team of ecologists located in Hull's Dublin, Ohio and Bedford, Ohio offices. I am part of our business development team that focuses on the ecological, surface water, land development, and energy, markets. Our clients include public and private clients in the energy, healthcare, retail, office, recreational, ecological restoration, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial markets.

Q.3 What is your education and professional background?

A-3. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona, a Master of Science in Biology (Ecology focus) from the University of Toledo, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Biology (Ecology focus) from the University of Toledo. I was a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Toledo for four years. I have been performing environmental consulting services for seven years at Hull.

Q.4 Have you testified previously before the Ohio Power Siting Board?

A-4. I have not testified previously before the Ohio Power Siting Board.

Q.5 On whose behalf are you offering testimony?

A-5. I am testifying on behalf of the Applicant, Union Ridge Solar, LLC (“Applicant”), in support of its Application filed in Case No. 20-1757-EL-BGN.

Q.6 What is the purpose of your testimony?

A-6. The purpose of my testimony is to describe the Ecological Assessment study my firm undertook on behalf of the Applicant, to summarize the results of that study, and to provide my assessment of proposed ecological impacts of the Union Ridge Solar Project (“Project”).

Q.7 Please describe the studies you and your firm undertook on behalf of the Applicant.

A-7. The Ecology and Wetlands group at Hull undertook an Ecological Assessment study to evaluate the anticipated impacts of the construction of the Project on streams and wetlands, wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered species. A copy of that study is included in the Application as Exhibit P.

Q.8 What was your role in the Ecological Assessment conducted for the Application?

A-8. As the Practice Lead, I reviewed the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC 4906-4-08) outlining the requirements for Health and Safety, Land Use, and Ecological Information for electric generation facilities. I coordinated a team of Hull ecologists and GIS specialists to prepare mapping and gather background information for the Project area. I managed a crew of ecologists who visited the Project area to assess habitat quality and land use and complete a surface water delineation. I led the development of the Ecological Assessment report and coordinated with the Applicant to gather information about the proposed development of the Project area. I participated in a public meeting to answer questions from local residents about ecological impacts of the proposed project.

Q.9 What were Hull's results from the assessment of endangered species in the Project Area?

A-9. The majority of the Project area does not offer high-quality habitat suitable for threatened or endangered species whose ranges include this portion of Ohio. Frequent and widespread maintenance and agricultural activities prevent the establishment of habitat suitable for sensitive plants and wildlife. Information received through coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicates there are no records of threatened and endangered species within a one-mile radius of the Project area. It is my understanding that precautionary measures will be taken to avoid impacts to tree-dwelling bats and aquatic species, in the unlikely event threatened or endangered species reside within the Project area.

Q.10 What were Hull's results regarding existing vegetation in the Project Area?

A-10. Hull evaluated the existing plant communities during a desktop review of historical aerial imagery and land use mapping, and subsequently during a field survey. Approximately 94 percent of the Project area is used for agricultural production; at the time of the survey, the agricultural fields were planted with corn and soybean. Deciduous forest was identified adjacent to an agricultural field in the northern portion of the Project area and in the riparian corridor along the South Fork Licking River. The dominant tree species included red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), and black willow (*Salix nigra*). The understory was dominated by non-native Eurasian dewberry (*Rubus caesius*). Portions of the wooded areas were delineated as palustrine forested wetlands. The residential areas within the Project area were dominated by turf grass.

1 **Q.11 What were Hull’s results regarding the impacts of the Project on wetlands?**

2 **A-11.** Hull delineated nine wetlands within the Project area. Low quality waters showed signs of
3 disturbance from agriculture and residential development in the area. To my knowledge,
4 impacts are proposed to two emergent wetlands for the permanent placement of access
5 roads and the solar array. I anticipate these impacts will meet the conditions of a
6 Nationwide Permit (NWP) 51 for Land-based Renewable Energy Generation Facilities or
7 57 for Electric Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities. To comply with the
8 requirements of these NWPs, discharge or fill activities must not cause the permanent loss
9 of greater than ½-acre of Waters of the U.S. To my knowledge, moderate and high-quality
10 wetlands will be avoided. Underground electrical and telecommunication lines are
11 expected to be installed under wetlands using horizontal directional drilling. Surface water
12 runoff during construction will use Best Management Practices (BMPs) that prevent
13 sediment from entering wetlands. Storm water discharges during construction will be
14 permitted through Ohio EPA’s General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated
15 with Construction Activity (OHC000005).

16 **Q.12 Does this conclude your direct testimony?**

17 **A-12.** Yes, it does. However, I reserve the right to offer supplemental testimony if necessary.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of the foregoing Testimony was served upon the parties of record listed below this 2nd day of September 2021 *via* electronic mail.



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Case No(s). 20-1757-EL-BGN

Summary: Testimony of Jordan Rofkar electronically filed by Teresa Orahod on behalf of
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