

Ohio Power Siting Board  
Case Number 21-0669-EL-BGN  
South Branch Solar

Dear Ohio Power Siting Board:

I thought it would be helpful to share my personal story of a landowner in the South Branch Solar Project in Hancock County. I also think it is important for the OPSB to hear about who farmers are that participate in solar projects, and our commitment to our community.

I was born and raised in Arcadia and we have a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farm where we have had both grain and livestock. I grew up with feeder hogs and cattle. I have two children, who my wife and I have raised here in Arcadia. I was a Marketing/Business Educator for 31 years, until I retired. My wife and I now own and operate Carey Brewing Station.

We operate a small hop farm that helps supply breweries from across the state since 2014. As family farmers, we prioritize supporting local agriculture and wanted to bring that principle to our nano-brewery in Carey. All of our beers are created using exclusively Ohio-made hops and barley, as we pride ourselves on crafting product lines that will give our customers a chance to taste the richness of the regional agriculture. In fact, we are now growing 15 different varieties of hops.

When I think about my life, and I think about solar—I think about transition.

After teaching for over 30 years, I am now in a transition to the next chapter of my life with the brewery and my children starting their first careers. I think about the transition of my farm—I am now growing hops and will have solar as a part of my operation and I think about the transition our country is taking with energy sources. Right now, many farmers are growing corn for ethanol and beans for biodiesel. Anyone who watched the Super Bowl knows electric vehicles are on the way, with that in mind, solar ensures Ohio farms will continue creating energy that will power vehicles, along with homes and businesses.

While transitions can sometimes be difficult, the truth is, it's a necessity of life.

My family is invested in our community and the solar project is an investment in our community. The revenue our land will produce under solar is significantly more than it contributes today. Over \$1 million annually will be generated for our schools and local services.

I ask that you please consider the position of a family who has chosen to participate in South Branch Solar because it is the right economic decision for us as we transition to a new phase in our lives and as the country transitions to new forms of energy.

Thank you,  
Derek Cunningham  
South Branch Solar  
[arcadiabuckeyehops@gmail.com](mailto:arcadiabuckeyehops@gmail.com)

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Dear Ohio Power Siting Board:

I am a life-long educator and farmer in Hancock County. Over the years, on our family farm we have raised hogs, cattle, chickens and dairy cows. Our current focus on grain, hops, and sheep.

I taught in Ohio Local Schools for 28 years and continued for another 10 years in the State of Florida. I loved to teach, and am proud that my son followed me in both education and agriculture. Our family is 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmers, and we have been farming for over 100 years.

As farmers, we always have to be looking at how we use our land in the best interest of our family and community, but the benefits don't stop at the property line. One of the things that helped me decide to participate was the way the project will create an economic benefit for the school system I taught in for decades without putting a burden on the community to fund new public services. So, our participation doesn't just help my family; it helps families throughout the community.

Our family is participating in the H2Ohio and CRP water quality programs. It is very important for us to take care of our land. Even after the solar is installed, we will continue to live and farm on the land. I am appreciative of the enormous amount of work that Leeward and the Ohio Power Siting Board put into this project to make sure it will be best in class. I know it takes over a year to permit the project because of the enormous number of studies that go into this effort.

I want to point out the significant financial value to our schools. As educators and graduates of our local school district, it gives me great honor to be able to contribute in a meaningful way through the PILOT. The amount of revenue generated off our land will be significantly greater than what it is today. Our schools need these revenues and will be able to count on them for decades to come.

Lastly, I have attached a letter from Ohio's livestock industry asking for county commissioners to not take action that would limit my property rights. South Branch is a grandfathered project from SB 52. My family and I have been working on this project for some time and we ask that you consider our rights as landowners to develop our farm in a meaningful way.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rex Cunningham  
Arcadia, Ohio

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Summary: Public Comment of Derek and Rex Cunningham, via website,  
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