

Regarding:

Wild Grains Solar, LLC

Case Number: 21-0823-EL-BGN

Please include this as testimony for Kenn Keysor and the Keysor Family in the case of Wild Grains Solar LLC.

In writing this letter I share my own thoughts and concerns in regards to the proposed development of farm land in Hoaglin Township, Van Wert County, Ohio.

I do have the support of my entire family which includes myself, my wife and two children, My mother, My Grandmother, and my brother. All of which reside in Van Wert County and own land and/or live in the project area. We were unanimous in our decision not to sign with this development as we believe the protection of our farm land, our ecosystem and our way of life is critical to the future of our family, our community, our country and our future generations.

Please take the time to read through and consider my comments. They are made with sincerity, much thought and consideration and a genuine concern for my community and my neighbors.

Thank you for your time.

Regarding:

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Dear Members of the board,

My name is Kenn Keysor. I am a resident of **Van Wert County, Hoaglin Township**. I am a lifelong farmer and I own and operate farm land in and around the proposed Wild Grains solar development. I am a fourth generation VanWert County farmer and a sixth generation Ohio farmer. As a farmer I have the utmost respect for our land and a love for nature and a desire to protect our natural resources. It is my passion in life to preserve these resources, namely the farmland, and to leave it better than I found it for future generations. Our community is about to be forever impacted by an industrial solar installation. This proposed project encompasses a large geographical foot print in our township. Scattered over several miles and several thousand acres. This land provides us with habitat for abundant wildlife, fresh water, and crop land that feeds the world. It is of dire importance that we protect this environment and our resources while maintaining and preserving our ability to feed an ever growing and demanding population. Solar developments such as the **wild grain solar** proposal do very little to protect our eco system. They take valuable farm land out of production stressing our already fragile food supply. They have the potential to endanger and stress wildlife, livestock and the people who live near them. They also pose a potential risk to our lakes and streams and our drinking water. I am sure that you understand how important our resources are and how we must continue to improve our preservation efforts while still being able to meet an ever growing demand for food, fuel, and fresh water. These massive solar projects go directly against those efforts. The following list is just some examples and concerns that I have about industrial solar. I make help make the case for why we should not be approving such developments.

1. **Food Supply.** These projects take valuable crop land out of production and place industrial scale power facilities on land that is zoned for and intended for agricultural use. Solar and wind installations **are not** farms. The construction of these developments lessens the amount of ground available to produce food. It has been well documented that feeding the ever growing population will become my difficult as time goes on. Taking farm land out of production is the last thing we should be doing. We lose thousands upon thousands of acres every year to development as it is. These type of installations would be better put on factory and warehouse roofs, elevated over parking lots or lining our interstate medians and road sides where thousands of acres lay idle and unused. Using crop land also places these power generators within close proximity to homes, livestock farms, and flowing waterways that in our case feed into lake Erie which already has problems. All over this poses a potential risk to humans and animals.

2. **Impact to our streams and lakes.** When these sites are developed the land becomes a hardscape. Solar panels do not absorb water. The ground around them can become compacted from construction and maintenance traffic. Ground elevations may be changed and surface water flows may be interrupted, altered or stopped all together. This can cause water drainage from neighboring (non-particpate) farms to be impacted

causing crop loss, flooding, and unfiltered runoff. This is a major issue in an area such as ours that relies heavily on water drainage via the surface as well as subsurface drain tiles. In many cases this water is drained across neighboring farms with communal drainage systems. Water that is drained through drainage tile is filtered through the soil before it exits into the creeks. The soil collects some containments and minerals and pins them in the soil. Surface drained water does not filter through the soil. It often flows directly into open ditches and creeks and ultimately to lake Erie. Hoaglin Creek, Maddox Creek, and Town Creek are three major drainage avenues for our county. All three of these run through Hoaglin Township and all three will come in contact with this development. All three creeks empty into the Auglaize River then to the Maumee and ultimately Lake Erie. These solar installations will greatly increase the amount of surface runoff. During construction of these facilities existing subsurface drainage will most certainly be damaged or destroyed creating even more surface run off. This could have a major impact on wildlife and Lake Erie as well as neighboring farms and homes.

3. **Ground water.** There is also the potential for ground water contamination. Solar panels contain toxic chemicals. I have already noted the potential for run off but what about the water that lays and then leaches into the ground? If these panels get damaged or as they age and begin to break down the potential for these chemical to come in contact with the soil and our ground water increases exponentially. These chemicals are then picked up by the water and leach into the ground or run off into our creeks ending up again in lake Erie. Our water table here is shallow. Very shallow in fact with the water table laying only 10'-15' below the surface in many areas. Underground aquifers carry water all over our region. If these chemicals were to enter the water table the end result would be catastrophic. The solar companies claim they are safe and the risk is minimal but they can't guarantee zero runoff or contamination. The risk to our community is far greater than the reward.

4. **Wildlife.** These projects will be fenced in. We have a lot of roaming wildlife. Deer, foxes, coyotes and critters of all kinds. once we fence in hundreds or thousands of acres we will limit the grazing area of these animals. We will force them out of the fields and onto the roadways in order for them to navigate the country side. The solar installations themselves give off a frequency or hum that can be harmful to animals and people. This will have an impact on the migration and feeding patterns of wildlife resulting in decreased numbers and the possible loss of life of countless animals. The loss of grazing land will also cause the animal population to cluster up or consolidate into smaller areas. This will cause more crop damage, lower the population and greatly increase the chances of disease spreading through the wildlife population.

5. **Quality of life.** I have addressed wildlife now lets talk about the people. People need sunshine, green fields, wildlife, fresh water, clean air and a myriad of other things that only nature can provide to lead happy, healthy lives. All of things combine to provide a quality of life and an expectation of life that we in Hoaglin township have grown accustomed to. Residents of our community currently enjoy these things. All of these things together improve physical health as well as mental health and overall well being. Now imagine you live in an area that provides all of these things and more. Imagine

building a home here, raising a family, starting a business, making a life for yourself in a rural, agricultural setting (*a garden of eden of sorts*). Now imagine a developer comes in and a small number of land owners, a good number of which do not live in the project area, decide to abandon that way of life. They choose to sell or lease their property to someone who doesn't value the same things we who live here do. Someone who comes in with a well rehearsed sales pitch, prewritten contracts and an open check book. This developer has no regard for the quality of life of the local residents, they have no regard for the environment or our wildlife or for future generations that will live here. They claim they do and they spout claims of environmental protection and land owner compensations but all they are really doing is the bare minimum required by the law. They are doing what they are forced to and nothing more. They are going to destroy thousands of acres of lush productive farm land and cover it with a sea of glass panels. All in the name of "green energy". When the project is approved and built these people go home, probably to a place without a solar panel or windmill insight (speculation only). The residents of Hoaglin twsp will be left with the aftermath. Myself along with several hundred others will be forced to live in, around, or near a giant industrial power facility. As I live and work in Hoaglin township I will be exposed every single day to thousands of glass panels. This will take an emotional and psychological toll on all the residents of our county. After all no one would volunteer to live inside of a factory but we will be forced to.

6. Land use. A change in land use will occur. We will be going from agricultural to industrial. I know that the renewable energy zones the state has set up allow for this but it's not right. Normally to rezone something the community would get a say in the matter. Conversations would take place and a vote of local residents would decide the outcome. But this doesn't happen with "green/renewable energy" projects. These project developments get to circumvent current zoning. This takes away the voice of the people. It no longer has to go to a local vote. It gets approved in Columbus under what I assume is a certain amount of political pressure with local residents having little to no say. Now I know we have a voice. This letter being an example of that. But local residents have no real power to decide what happens in our community. I have been told by our county officials that notices were sent out and meetings held. One of our commissioners told us that had they have known there was so much opposition to this project that maybe it could have been stopped early on. Very few people recall any notices or meetings. Our township trustees decided that the tax money was too important and 3 people voted not to hold a community vote. The residence are being silenced by big money and politics. A small number of land owners very few of which live in the project zone will get to decide the quality of life of an entire community. A very few will get to financially benefit while the rest live with the consequences of their decision. We've been farmers for generations. We are an agricultural community. We thrive on growing crops to feed people and animals and to make fuel. As much as they try wind and solar developments are not farms. They convert farm land into industrial developments. They are factories and they are being built on agricultural land near homes and they are having a negative impact on communities.

7. Land values. The solar developers continue to deny that they impact land values. They continue to lie. Studies have been done and articles published to the contrary. Commonsense will tell you the opposite is true. You surround a home or a community with thousands upon thousands of solar panels and the value of that property will decline. It is a fact. No one looks at a massive solar development and says boy I'd love to live there. The equity that people have in their homes, the homes they worked so hard for, will be diminished. Personal wealth will be negatively impacted. All of this in the name of progress. All so a very few can benefit.

8. Our Petition. Myself and a few other residents canvassed our neighbors with a petition. This Petition was submitted to the OPSB and you should have it on record. I don't know the final signature count but I believe it to be 50-60. This may not sound like a lot but I believe there are only around 600 residents in our township and we primarily focused on those who lived within or very near the proposed development area. In talking with these people The vast majority of them had never heard of the proposal and were unaware that they lived so close. Some had heard of it but had no details. Some of them had signed good neighbor contracts but did so because they were told by Avangrid representatives that this project was going to happen anyways so they might as well get paid (dirty tactics). I was directly told this by more than one resident. A few even signed the petition even though they had a good neighbor agreement because they really didn't want them built and they felt they were deceived. Now in all honesty I did talk to a few people who were in favor of the development but those were few and far between. Now I don't know the actual numbers but if you research the land that is signed up for this development I think you will find that the vast majority of the land owners do not live in the project area. Many of them do not live in Hoaglin Township or even Van Wert County. Some may not even live in Ohio. These land owners will not be impacted in the same way our local residents will.

These are just a few of the reasons I strongly object to this development.

I would like to briefly share a few observations of mine. While at the May 3rd hearing in Van Wert I noticed that the first person to speak was a paid union steward. Someone who doesn't live here, who has no direct relationship to our community or this project and whose testimony was solicited, bought and paid for. His testimony should hold zero bearing on your decision. I also witnessed questionable testimony being given by local residents who have signed contracts. I have been informed by one of my township trustees that Avangrid renewables held a meeting the week prior in which they gave talking points to and coached project participants on what to say. I am currently in the process of acquiring a document that was being given to local business owners by Avangrid representatives who were trying to get them to testify on behalf of the project. This was either talking points or a prewritten statement I'm not sure at this point. Now I know this is all hearsay and probably isn't illegal. I am not accusing anyone of illegal behavior or foul play. I want to be clear about that. I only mention these things because this is what we believe we are up against. Political tactics, big money, corporate lawyers and half truths. I speak from some experience in these matters as we dealt with the same things when the windmill project was built some ten years ago. Half truths and

bullying tactics by developers. These developers are only here for the money. After all that is what developers do. They follow the money. I don't fault them for that. However this development will put the local ecology and our environment as a whole at risk. It will disrupt lives, alter the landscape, and put families finances, health and wellbeing in danger. The negative Impact this project will have is far greater than any claimed benefit.

To be clear I am not against solar or wind power. I believe all forms of energy production have their place and can be useful. I am however strongly against industrialized power facilities being built on agricultural land and in close proximity to homes and livestock operations. I am against the impact this will have on our community, our eco system and our way of life. Taking land out of crop production especially in large numbers such as this will have a ripple effect on our community and our environment. Less land to farm means less grain. Less grain means less availability of food and less grain to local elevators and processors. That in turn means less revenue for these businesses who are already stressed. Less land also means higher land prices and less availability which will have a negative impact on farmers, both current and future generations. Less land also has a negative impact on wildlife; the birds of the sky, the fish in our streams and lakes and the animals that roam freely will all be negatively impacted. Industrial developments such as these put our ecosystem at greater risk.

In conclusion industrial scale solar and wind projects are a detrimental use of our resources and should not be considered for Van Wert County, Ohio. I ask that you vote to disallow this project and any other future projects in Van Wert county, Ohio. Help us preserve our precious farm land and our way of life. Help preserve our wildlife and the natural habitat they have now. Preserve our quality of life and be a voice of reason when the final vote comes in.

Thank you for your consideration.

** Versions of this letter are being mailed and emailed as well.*

Kenn Keysor, Keysor Farms LLC

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Summary: Public Comment of Kenn Keysor and the Keysor Family, via website,
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