



RE: Proposed Solar Complex

Date: May 1, 2021

To: Klickitat County Commissioners

Dear Commissioners,

This correspondence is from the Yakima County Farm Bureau (YCFB). YCFB is a grass roots organization with 2700 members consisting of farmers and ranchers with operations both large and small as well as other folks with interest in agriculture affairs in Yakima and Klickitat Counties.

It has come to the attention of our Farm Bureau that a large solar industrial complex is being planned in the proximity of the town of Goldendale. Though we have more to learn about the elements of this proposal we are deeply concerned by what we have discovered thus far.

As a representative of our member farmers and ranchers, we believe in preserving farm and ranch lands for future generations while respecting property rights of owners of private lands who are currently on the land. We also respect and encourage a diverse choice of power sources including renewable alternatives like solar. We believe that energy is very important to our economy.

The YCFB understands that there is a legal mechanism where the Governor can unilaterally approve this project without addressing local concerns. We believe this is wrong.

Our Farm Bureau believes that local input and decision making is essential in this case for there are far too many factors that will not be properly weighed under the Governors Fast Track authority.

The YCFB understands that the location of this proposed solar complex is about 3 miles away from the near edge of Goldendale and presently twice the footprint of that town at about 3,000 acres in size. That seems a bit out of balance. It is situated on good tillable land with good natural moisture compared to the bulk of Eastern Washington. Around the immediate area there are working farms (including the land to be converted) and there are many smaller parcels with homes and families that would be impacted.

The YCFB believes that a land owner has a right to sell their land at a good profit if they chose, that's an integral part of the property rights. However, other affected landowners have a right to enjoy their property as well and to continue to farm and/or live in comparative harmony and a project of this scope, location and nature raises serious concerns.

Some of these concerns include the probable devaluation of properties adjacent and/or in view of this proposal. In general, Klickitat County is quite scenic, witness the Scenic River designation nearby. It is an idyllic area that many folks have bought property, built homes and chose to live there even though the job market is scant save for farming and ranching and it is a value most cherished by the long standing farming and ranching community as well.

Our understanding is that a cyclone fence would be constructed around the perimeter of this large solar complex. This raises another issue, that of wildlife concentration around the perimeter and their out of proportion impacts on remaining landowners.

Another serious concern is how storm and snow melt runoff would be affected by a 3,000 acre solar complex where the solar panels create un-natural runoff conditions and the vegetation management is likely to exacerbate the problem as well. The YCFB believes that soil erosion and water quality will be degraded. A solar complex recently permitted and under construction near Bickleton called Lund Hill has utilized an EIS conducted for wind farms. This is most alarming given our concerns about water quality impacts. A wind turbine is said to be equal to 25 acres of solar panels in generating capacity but occupies just ¼ acre. That is a ratio of 100 to 1 and the area around a turbine is still farmable and grazable. The YCFB believes that an EIS for a wind farm bears no relation to the concerns related to a solar complex with such a divergent foot print ratio.

Further, the YCFB believes that good tillable lands are the least desirable to site an industrial sized solar complex upon and the most desirable to retain for agricultural production. With even a cursory knowledge of Klickitat County one should be able to find less agriculturally productive lands with reasonable access to the power grid that solar power generation can be more wisely accomplished upon.

Our Farm Bureau has other concerns we would like to share with the Commission about this matter at an appropriate time. We believe that Klickitat County and its locally affected citizens are the fair and proper arbitrator of this matter. A Fast Track process conducted in the Governor's administration is not appropriate or wise and forces people negatively affected by its unilateral decision making to live with the "fallout" without the decision makers being similarly affected.

The YCFB believes that if this proposal was to surface with in the area of the I5 corridor or even more appropriately adjacent to the Capital, it would not even "make it to paper".

Sincerely,

Mark Herke

President, Yakima County Farm Bureau