



To: Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC)

Date: Sept 26, 2021

RE: Proposed Goose Prairie Solar Complex, Second Round of Comments

Dear Council Members,

These comments are 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.

Please note that our prior comments are still valid for this scoping and these comments serve to reinforce and continue our prior objections.

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. This proposed project removes lands from agricultural production. Under this proposal, the Washington Department of Wildlife would purchase on a formula about one additional acre for each acre in the project for mitigation. The YCFB is very opposed to this inefficient conversion of agricultural land.

Wind turbines that are being updated are said to be equal to 25 acres of solar panels in generating capacity but occupy just ¼ acre each. That is a ratio of 100 to 1 and the area around a turbine is still farmable and grazable. The solar complex proposes to offer no other value other than electrical generation but at a high cost of lost agricultural production relative to wind turbines.

The inefficient use of lands by solar combined with the anticipated mitigation of 2 acres removed from agriculture production (one acre of panels plus one additional acre for mitigation causes this solar project to require a two hundred fold land requirement to generate electricity compared to a constructed wind turbine of modern design.

Beyond the direct loss of farm and ranch land, the YCFB continues to oppose the future impacts to adjoining lands that are not a part of this project. In the first round of comments a Mr. Patnode expressed concerns about loss of his property values as well as impacting his quality of life. The YCFB concurs with Mr. Patnode.

The YCFB still firmly believes that installing of solar panels as close as possible in a large acreage is unwise and would suggest a series of modifications to these proposals that could mitigate some of our concerns. Solar panels on a large scale will alter water runoff and without room for other land features to be created, downstream neighbors will be adversely affected because there will be no opportunity for the provision of settling basins and related structures.

The general area in question has experienced large wild fires and the YCFB believes that solar panels burning would constitute a dire air quality emergency. Recent wildfires in the greater area have caused serious health hazards with only native vegetation ablaze, imagine several hundred acres of solar panels also burning. It is important to note that the Yakima Basin is very prone to long periods of air stagnation. If considerable numbers of solar panels were to ignite, large scale evacuations would likely result. One must also understand that the first rule of fire fighter safety is to not venture beyond the "first electric wires" thus the First Responder response would be restricted because of the added unsafe condition caused by the necessary electric cables present to sustain the panels.

The YCFB continues to vigorously advocate that the facility be designed expressly to allow grazing by domestic animals, both sheep and cattle to improve vegetation management and create a co-production of electricity plus agricultural products. Mowing and chemical use would be drastically reduced plus the inability to mow during the fire season would not likely be problematic. The improved management afforded by utilizing livestock would likely reduce runoff from the site as well as better stabilize the easily wind-blown soils of the site.

Finally, our Farm Bureau continues to firmly believe 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 believes that Yakima County and its locally affected citizens is 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 continues to believe that if this proposal was to surface with in the area of the Interstate 5 corridor or even more appropriately adjacent to the Capital, it would not even "make it to paper".

The YCFB is not opposed to solar energy but we believe that better planning and layout as well as a change of goals and a better much more thorough environmental review (that of a full EIS) conducted at a local level are crucial to making this proposal more palatable to the residents of Yakima County.

Sincerely,

Mark Herke

President, Yakima County Farm Bureau