

Jeff Watson

From: wck4 <wckenner@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 5:36 PM
To: Jeff Watson
Cc: ArdyLinde@hotmail.com
Subject: Iron Horse Solar Farm Comments

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Dear Mr. Watson,

I read with great interest the proposal to construct a solar energy facility on what is now productive farmland. I find it hard to believe that this use is consistent with Ag-20 zoning or the Growth Management Act.

As a valley resident, farmer and engineering consultant, I have serious reservations about approving such a project to be built at the proposed location:

1. Converting any productive farmland to industrial use should not be allowed.
2. Siting this solar facility in an area of family farms changes the character of the area. Ellensburg and Kittitas has a long history of farming.
3. Although those proposing the construction of this facility may tell you differently, other solar facilities generate a lot of EMI / RFI / acoustic noise
4. How is weed control to be managed so as not to contaminate adjacent farmland.
5. Who is responsible for removing the equipment should the company leasing the land go bankrupt.

Concerning point 1, there are many alternative sites available for the construction of solar facilities on land which is not useable for farming. According to USDA the US is losing about 1 acre of farmland every minute. We should not be adding to this problem. There is only so much good farmland available. To convert it to industrial use because it is convenient to do so should not be allowed.

Concerning point 2, most of the residents live (or move here) because of the rural nature of the area. To put up a solar facility runs contrary to the very nature of the valley. We can much more effectively 'go green' by utilizing land which is currently of only marginal utility than taking out prime farmland.

Concerning point 3, EMI / RFI / acoustic noise is a continuing challenge which will require mitigation. The solar facilities require the conversion of DC generated power from the panels to AC required for the sub-stations. It has been found that the inverters used for this purpose have created issues with TELCOM, Satellite, public safety and other radio services. Presumably these issues will be addressed in more modern solar installations. Note that these problems are difficult, if not impossible, to fix after the fact. The Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) is a good example of a good idea which had disastrous results when EMI/RFI couldn't be "fixed". Acoustic noise is also an issue. Neighbors of some existing solar facilities have complained of the constant humming produced by the inverters.

Concerning point 4, weed management / control is important to us who grow crops for a living. Is there some plan to control noxious weeds around this facility?

Who will be responsible for weed control?

Concerning point 5, we have all seen alternative energy companies go bankrupt (Solindra et. al.). Who will be responsible for the cleanup should this happen?

We really don't want 48 acres of solar panels sitting derelict in the middle of farm country while waiting for someone to come along and remove / repurpose them.

As you are no doubt aware, there are currently very attractive tax advantages to setting up solar generation. What happens when the government incentives are cut back or disappear altogether? The current state of the art in PV generation is progressing at a rapid rate but is still not a viable economic alternative without subsidies.

I am a big fan of alternative energy and believe it to be a big part of our future. We can't continue to depend as heavily on fossil fuels as in the past.

However, with any non-trivial engineering challenge, there are tradeoffs. It may be very convenient to set up solar facilities (or shopping centers, etc.) on farmland but the fact of the matter is, we are running out of farmland and should not allow matters of expediency to outweigh the urgent need to preserve farmland. There may be a nearby substation into which power can be delivered in Kittitas but there are also substations located near the wind farms which are sited on non-farmland.

Sincerely,

William C. Kenner VI

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