

From: [Mitchell Litfin](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Benton Solar Project Written Comment
Date: Thursday, September 11, 2025 8:43:50 AM

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Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

121 7th Place East, Suite 350
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Subject: Opposition to the Benton Solar Project – Request to Deny Site Permit or Include Specific Conditions

Dear Members of the Public Utilities Commission,

I am writing as a concerned resident to express my opposition to the proposed Benton Solar Project currently under consideration. While I understand the broader goals of transitioning to renewable energy, this project raises significant concerns due to its proximity to residential homes and the unknown immediate and long-term health effects it may pose to nearby families.

The location of this project—so close to where people live—raises red flags about both quality of life and public health. As of now, there is insufficient data regarding the potential impacts of utility-scale solar installations on nearby residents, particularly with respect to electromagnetic fields, noise, and potential groundwater contamination. Until more comprehensive and independent health and environmental studies are conducted, I urge the Commission to deny the site permit for the Benton Solar Project.

However, should the Commission choose to approve the site permit, I respectfully request that the following conditions be included to mitigate its impact on the surrounding community:

1. **Visual Impact Mitigation:** Require the construction of an **8-foot earthen berm** with mature **tree plantings** along any portion of the project boundary adjacent to residential homes. This will help reduce the visual intrusion and preserve the rural character of the area.
2. **Groundwater Protection:** Mandate that **NextEra Solar** conduct **baseline testing of all residential well water** within a one-mile radius of the project site prior to construction. Annual water testing should be required for the **duration of the project** to monitor any

potential impacts and protect residents' drinking water.

3. **Public Safety Support:** Require NextEra Solar to allocate a **set annual financial contribution** to local fire departments, specifically those that provide **mutual aid to the Sauk Rapids Fire Department**, to support emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the event of a fire or other incident related to the project.

These conditions are reasonable and necessary to protect the health, safety, and well-being of nearby residents, and to ensure that the burdens of the Benton Solar Project are not unfairly borne by the local community.

Thank you for considering this input as you evaluate the site permit for the Benton Solar Project.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Litfin
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