

Batch E-Filing for Docket 25-88/25-89 – 12 Comments

1. Janelle Schettler
2. Julie Lopez
3. Michelle Brunk
4. Shari Lenz
5. Kelli Brake
6. Kimberly and Andrew Braun
7. Anna Deitchler
8. Makayla Brunk
9. JoAnn Burkard
10. Haley Slater
11. Rodney Burkard Jr
12. Mark Lenz

From: [Janelle Schettler](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment Docket no 25-88, 25-89
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 9:22:45 PM
Attachments: [Docket No 25-88 comment regarding Summit Lake Solar Energy Generating System.pdf](#)
[Docket no 25-89 comment regarding the proposed BESS associate with Summit Lake Solar Project in Nobles County.pdf](#)

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Please find pdf files attached containing my public comments in regards to Dockets n. 25-88 and 25-89.

Thank you!

Janelle Schettler
20283 130th Street
Wilmont, MN 56185

I am submitting comments regarding the proposed Summit Lake Solar Energy Generating System in Nobles County, Minnesota, near Reading. Docket no 25-88.

This project includes approximately 1,482 acres of active solar infrastructure within roughly 1,990 acres under site control, located in an area defined by highly productive, tile-drained agricultural land. The scale and location of this project raise significant concerns related to soil integrity, water management, wildlife habitat, and long-term agricultural sustainability.

Construction activities associated with utility-scale solar development—including pile driving, trenching, grading, and heavy equipment use—are known to cause persistent soil compaction and degradation of soil structure. These impacts reduce water infiltration and long-term productivity, and they are not easily reversed. Even after decommissioning, soils often do not return to their original condition. Given the quality of farmland in this area, this represents a potentially irreversible loss.

In addition, agricultural production in Nobles County relies heavily on subsurface tile drainage systems. Disruption to these systems during construction or changes in surface hydrology caused by the installation of solar arrays can result in altered drainage patterns, ponding, and downstream impacts. Solar panels also concentrate runoff along their edges, increasing the risk of erosion and nutrient transport in an already sensitive agricultural watershed.

There are also site-specific environmental concerns that should be carefully evaluated. A wetland supporting diverse wildlife is located within approximately one-half mile of the proposed solar fields, and active bald eagle nesting has been observed within approximately one-quarter mile. Wetlands are highly sensitive to hydrologic changes, and bald eagles are a protected species whose nesting success can be affected by nearby disturbance and habitat alteration. These factors warrant a more detailed assessment of indirect impacts.

While vegetation plans may include pollinator-friendly plantings, these outcomes depend entirely on long-term maintenance and enforcement. Without clear, measurable standards, such areas often degrade into low-value or invasive vegetation over time.

Beyond site-specific impacts, the project will fragment contiguous agricultural land and reduce the efficiency and viability of surrounding farming operations. This is not just a temporary land use change, but a structural shift in how the land can be used going forward.

My family has direct ties to this area. In addition to the nearby wetland and wildlife habitat described above, my husband and I farm in Nobles County and live approximately 10 miles from the project site. The removal of a substantial amount of productive farmland from availability raises legitimate concerns about long-term access to farmland and increasing land costs for the next generation of farmers.

Given the scale and location of this project, approval should not be granted without clearly defined and enforceable conditions. At a minimum, this should include baseline and post-construction soil testing, along with measurable soil restoration standards and long-term

monitoring to ensure agricultural productivity is preserved. Comprehensive mapping and protection of all subsurface drainage systems should be required prior to construction, with mandatory restoration to equal or improved function and post-construction verification. In addition, stormwater modeling must accurately reflect panel-driven runoff patterns, supported by enhanced erosion control measures and ongoing monitoring with corrective enforcement. These protections should be established as binding permit conditions, not voluntary commitments.

I have many concerns about the potential of this project moving forward. Please take the time to carefully consider all of these factors and how the environment, wildlife, the lives of the nearby residents and the future of agriculture in Nobles County will be impacted if this project proceeds. This land is the most valuable natural resource that we have in this county, we need to be good stewards of it and preserve it for our future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Janelle Schettler

20283 130th Street

Wilmont, MN 56185

I am submitting this comment regarding the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) associated with the Summit Lake Solar Project in Nobles County, Minnesota, located near the community of Reading. Docket no 25-89

Battery energy storage systems introduce environmental and public safety risks that are distinct from those associated with solar generation alone. In the event of system failure or fire, lithium-ion batteries can release toxic substances, including hydrogen fluoride gas, and may result in contamination of soil and groundwater. Fire suppression efforts can also produce contaminated runoff, which poses additional risks to surrounding land and water resources.

Given the agricultural setting and the region's reliance on managed drainage systems, any release of contaminants—whether airborne or waterborne—has the potential to impact nearby farmland and water systems.

The proposed location, approximately one mile from Reading, places residents within a realistic range of potential exposure in the event of a significant incident. This proximity raises concerns about emergency response capabilities, evacuation planning, and communication with the public.

Battery systems are also susceptible to thermal runaway events, which can be difficult to control and may burn for extended periods. These risks require careful consideration of system design, monitoring, and containment.

In addition, long-term management of battery systems presents challenges related to replacement, disposal, and potential environmental contamination over time. These factors should be fully addressed as part of the permitting process.

My family lives and farms in Nobles County, and while our residence is approximately 10 miles from the site, we have a strong interest in the long-term environmental safety and sustainability of the area. The proximity of this facility to Reading and surrounding rural residents underscores the need for a cautious and thorough evaluation.

Given the potential risks associated with chemical release, fire, and water contamination, this facility should not be approved without clear, enforceable safeguards. At a minimum, these should include comprehensive emergency response planning coordinated with local authorities, full containment measures to prevent off-site environmental contamination, and defined protocols for incident response and remediation. In addition, the project should be required to maintain a clearly defined disposal and recycling plan for all battery components, along with financial assurance sufficient to cover full decommissioning and any necessary environmental cleanup. These protections should be established as binding permit conditions, not voluntary commitments.

I have many concerns about the potential of this project moving forward. Please take the time to carefully consider all of these factors and how the environment, wildlife, the lives of the nearby residents and the future of agriculture in Nobles County will be impacted if this project proceeds.

Public Comment Regarding the Proposed Solar and BESS Projects in Summit Lake & Elk Townships:

As a lifelong resident of Nobles County, I am writing to you in strong opposition of the Summit Lake Solar and Battery storage projects. Not only have I attended many meetings regarding these projects, I have listened to the community responses and read the comments submitted. It is clear that the majority of the residents do not want this. They have spoken in regards to their concerns and I hope that the residents are heard. I hope this is not just another “hoop” we are having to go through to make it sound like we, the people of Nobles County, truly have a voice.

Projects of this size and scale need to be in an industrial zone and our agricultural area needs to be protected. According to the Nobles County Zoning Ordinance, this area of the county is considered “prime agricultural” land. On page 1 of this ordinance, it states the “PURPOSE AND INTENT” of the ordinance:

201. This Ordinance is adopted for the purpose of:

1. Protecting the public health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience and general welfare.
2. Protecting and preserving economically viable agricultural land.
3. Promoting orderly development of the residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and public areas.
4. Conserving the natural and scenic beauty and attractiveness of the county.
5. Conserving and developing natural resources in the county.
6. Providing for the compatibility of different land uses and the most appropriate use of land throughout the county.
7. Minimizing environmental pollution.

In Section 10, the “NOBLES COUNTY POLICY PLAN” states “Perhaps the most distinguishing natural features in the county are the highly productive soils and relatively flat land which has helped to make Nobles County one of the most agriculturally productive counties ***in the state.***”

Each year, more and more land is taken out of production. We cannot eat solar panels. We cannot afford to have the toxins leak into our precious soil and ground water. The only people who would benefit from this are the people who sell out and the billion dollar companies behind this. They will walk away with even more money and leave the residents with the mess to clean up. This is not what is in the best interest of the residents, future generations, area wildlife, and our environment.

You have asked for us to respond to the following questions.

1. **Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy system?**

NO

- We recently found out that the company(s) behind the projects have been in conversations with agreeing land owners for about 10 years. The first lease agreement was signed in 2016. Members of the community only heard about this project a year ago. That is not being honest and transparent. They couldn't talk about it, but apparently there were no NDA's signed???
- Solar panels are known to leave behind debris, glass shards, and hazardous materials that make the land unusable for future farming. Also, due to the toxins and leeching of heavy metals, crops cannot be grown on the land again.
- Runoff would expose neighboring fields to contamination.

This land is the most valuable natural resource that we have in this county, we need to be good stewards of it and preserve it for our future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Janelle Schettler

20283 130th Street

Wilmont, MN 56185

From: [Julie Lopez](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: PUC Docket #'s IP-7153/GS-25-89 and IP-7153/ESS-25-88 OSH # 21-2500-41031
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 7:10:06 AM
Attachments: [Elk Township Resolution \(1\).pdf](#)

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Public Comment

I believe the Commission should not grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy generating system nor permit for the proposed battery energy storage system. I am a resident of Elk township and strongly believe that land in the agriculture preservation district should remain for agricultural use only.

The Elk Township board passed a resolution to preserve agricultural land, see attached.

Thank you,
Julie Lopez
32557 210th Street
Worthington, MN 56187
507-360-2418

ELK TOWNSHIP

RESOLUTION

STATE OF MINNESOTA

COUNTY OF NOBLES

TOWNSHIP OF ELK

**RESOLUTION TO MAINTAIN STATE AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION POLICY IN ELK
TOWNSHIP WITH NO TEXT AMMENDMENT CHANGE TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE
BY NOBLES COUNTY**

WHEREAS, Minn.Stat. § 40A.01 dictates the goal to (1) preserve and conserve agricultural land, including forest land, for long-term agricultural use in order to protect the productive natural resources of the state, maintain the farm and farm-related economy of the state, and assure continued production of food and timber and agricultural uses; (2) preserve and conserve soil and water resources; and (3) encourage the orderly development of rural and urban land uses.

WHEREAS, agriculture is a fundamental industry in Elk Township contributing to the local economy, providing employment and maintaining a sustainable food supply.

WHEREAS, the preservation of farmland is essential to maintaining the rural character, scenic views, and quality of life in our Township.

WHEREAS, the preservation of agricultural land keeps Elk Township an agricultural community with the potential to support and sustain family farm operations with continued access to viable farmland, which is vital to the success of Elk Township and Nobles County.

WHEREAS, the Township recognizes the need to protect prime agricultural soils and productive natural resources, including water, from premature or inefficient conversion to non-agricultural uses.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the town board of Elk Township, Nobles County, Minnesota does hereby support the no text amendment change to the Nobles County Zoning Ordinance, as recommended by the Zoning Commission on 2/4/2026 during the public hearing. This position maintains that no data center be built on farmland in Elk Township.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the authorizing authority of Elk Township does adopt this resolution.

	Yes	No	Other
Supervisor/Chairman Dierks	<u>X</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
Supervisor Dekker	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>X</u>
Supervisor Gravenhof	<u>X</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>

Conflict of Interest

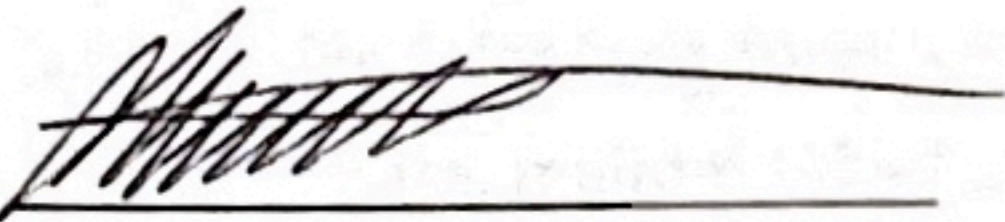
Adopted this 24 day of February, 2026.

BY THE BOARD



Town Chair

Attest:



Town Clerk

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 3:59:00 PM

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Name *	Michelle Brunk
Address	☐ 28210 200th St. Reading, Minnesota 56165 United States
Provide the docket's number.	25-88
Leave a comment on the docket. *	Please see my attached letter.
Attach a File	letter to puc_solar_and_bess.docx 1.27 MB • DOCX

- Hail, tornadoes, and straight line winds could destroy solar panels. This would not only contaminate the land on which they are located, but land around the area will also be contaminated.
- There is currently a pair of bald eagles nesting in a property adjacent to the proposed solar panel site. These pictures were taken at 17679 McCall Ave., Reading, MN in March 2026. We need to protect bald eagles and other local wildlife. There is documentation of birds thinking that solar panels are bodies of water and they dive into them, resulting in their death.



- Wildlife will be impacted by the 7-8 foot tall fences, not allowing natural migration patterns.
- Trees take years to grow. “Vegetative screening” will not happen for a long time, creating visual impacts to nearby residents.
- Solar panels take farmland out of production, increasing the cost of farmland and making it harder for current farmers to buy more land or for young farmers to get started.
- The cost of food continues to rise. Taking more land out of production is only going to drive those prices higher.
- Solar panels bring down the property value of those who live by them. That is unfair! Residents have put their blood, sweat, and tears into their properties, sometimes for generations, only to have that ripped out from under them with no warning. They were not included in these conversations that we find out have been happening for years, and now they are the ones who will suffer.
- KARE11 reported on February 25, 2026: “The USDA's annual report on farms and farmland in the United States is out, and Minnesota is down big. The number of farms in Minnesota fell from 65,300 in 2024 to 64,000 in 2025. The amount of farmland across the state also fell by 100,000 acres.” That is 1,300 less farms in MN alone. Each of these projects claims they are only taking “x” amount of land out of production. However, each of these projects adds up. This needs to stop!!! This project alone would take out almost 2,000 acres of prime agricultural land. The amount of land being taken at this rate is unsustainable for future generations.

- In our northern climate, solar panels will not be efficient during blizzards or when they are covered in snow. Other times of the year it is cloudy or foggy for days.
- Solar panels should be placed on roofs, the top of stores, parking ramps, and failing malls or over parking lots. Many people would likely not disagree that that is a better place for them. Do not use prime farmland!
- Tile and drainage systems will be disrupted. This does not only impact the field the solar panels are placed in, but it will impact other fields as it is an interconnected system.
- At the presentation given at the public hearing on 4/6/26, the presenter stated there would be “several jobs” created through this project. The slide in the presentation said “3-4 full time jobs for Summit Lake Solar” and “1-2 full time staff for Summit Lake BESS.” That is less jobs than the number of jobs that will be impacted by taking farmland out of production.
- If solar panels are such a great alternative, why is this proposed to be a 30 year project? If solar energy is as great as some claim it to be, it should be good forever. After 30 years, those who are starting the project will no longer be around to ensure the decommissioning process is done properly. This project has already changed hands, being bought by Geronimo, since the public found out about this project about a year ago.
- When it comes to the end of the life of this project and restoration of the land, we need to know:
 - o Where does all of the hazardous material (solar modules, racking, batteries, and containers) go?
 - o Will the developer be responsible for the removal of the operating and maintenance buildings, driveways, access and haul roads, electric collector lines (above and below ground), inverters and transformers, fences, and stormwater basins?
 - o Does decommissioning include all temporary and permanent infrastructure, including crane paths, new or widened access roads, temporary staging or storage areas, new driveways, or temporary access from public roads?
 - o Who is responsible for the removal of the materials, decommissioning, and restoration?
 - o Who pays for decommissioning and restoration?
- 30 years is NOT temporary. This land will not be able to be used again. Toxins, compaction, drainage, and environmental impacts will be irreversible.
- There are instances across the country where decommissioned solar project developers did not remove all of the material from the property. The company in charge only removed materials from 3 feet down. The rest of the hazardous materials were left in the ground. What protections are put in place in order for that to be avoided in the future? These companies cannot be trusted.

2. Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed battery energy storage system?
NO

- This BESS only holds 4 hours worth of charge???!!!! That is such a waste of prime farmland and not worth the risks to the community and environment.
- This is not practical or environmentally safe for people, animals, or crops.
- We only have volunteer fire departments. Who will be responsible for this if it catches fire? It was mentioned that these battery fires have to just burn out. It is so windy here more days than it is not. If there is a fire that big, and it cannot be contained, it is going to end up burning a significant amount of land, and potentially homes.
- Who is in charge of training our firefighters? Who will pay for it? The volunteer departments and county should not have to be responsible for that added cost.
- If this would catch fire, the area would be exposed to toxic smoke and soil and water contamination.
- It is dangerous to put a BESS unit that close to the powerlines.

3. If granted, what conditions or requirements should be included in the site permits?

- Set back should be ***at least*** 1,000 feet from a nonparticipating resident's property line. No less. People should not have this forced into their space if they don't want it. Be respectful to their quality of life.
- The project developer needs to be held responsible – even if it changes hands in the next 30 years. When the project reaches its end of life, the developer needs to pay for the responsible removal of the materials, decommissioning, and restoration.
- Construction hours need to be monitored so it does not impact area residents.
- Noise and lighting needs to be minimized, with restrictions put in place AND followed.
- There needs to be an established, clear plan for violations of what happens if the requirements for noise mitigation, visual screening, lights, etc. are not being met.
- Move the BESS away from the power lines. Put it out in the middle of the section that is completely solar panels.
- When piles and other equipment are pulled out, all damaged tile needs to be replaced.

Nobles County has had a long history of being an Agricultural Preservation area. When area residents have requested to build in the county, they have been told “No” and they respect that because of the ordinance put in place decades ago. Developers and billion dollar companies should have to abide by the same rules as everyone else.

In closing, I request that you deny the site permits that are being requested. Uphold our county ordinance to keep our land “prime agricultural” and keep industrial projects in industrial areas. By allowing solar panels to replace prime farmland, we will lose food production, our quality of life will be impacted, our wildlife and environment will be destroyed, and a piece of rural America will be gone...FOREVER. If we want future generations to have farms and food, we need to protect it now.

Say NO.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Brunk

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Saturday, April 18, 2026 3:06:07 PM

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Name *	Shari Lenz
Address	☐ 18789 Bulick Ave Lismore, MN 56155 United States
Phone Number	(507) 220-5668
Email	shari.33@hotmail.com
Provide the docket's number.	25-88 and 25-89

Leave a comment on the docket. *

My husband and I crop farm and live in Lismore Township. I am strongly opposed to this solar and battery project being placed on fertile farmland and/or anywhere near homes. The area proposed has never been zoned for anything but agriculture and is currently being properly used for that purpose. Not only is this particular land farmland, most of it is PRIME farmland. It takes a special person to keep this kind of soil in top condition – it takes the dedication of a true farmer. Those that are handing their land over to this solar project should be ashamed to think that money is going to better their lives while the fertile land they once took care of stands stagnant. That land will be dying a slow death for a staggering 30 years and in my eyes so will they. If they were a true farmer, it would be nauseating for them to see the soil sit idle and not be used for its intended purpose.

According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, "Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. A recent trend in land use in some areas has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. In an effort to identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local government organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the protection of the Nation's food supply."

This shows that our country's land stewards went to such an extent as to label and inventory the land that is needed to protect the nations' food supply. We, as Minnesotans, are blessed to have it right in our backyards, yet here we are talking about letting a huge corporation take almost 2000 acres out of production for an entire generation! Not just a quarter, not a section, but 3 sections of land! Land fit for food production should be seated as number one at all times. There should be no reason for anything to have precedence over food production, "green" or otherwise.

In 1984 the Agricultural Land Preservation Policy Act established a program to preserve agricultural land. Why would those that wrote this act dedicate their time and resources to do so? Because they saw the need to protect our precious ag land, especially Prime ag land. Minnesota Statute 17.80 State Agricultural Land Preservation and Conservation Policy Subdivision 1 reads "It is the policy of the state to preserve agricultural land and conserve its long-term use for the production of food and other agricultural products by: (a) Protection of agricultural land and certain parcels of open space land from conversion to other uses; (b) Conservation and enhancement of soil and water resources to ensure their long-term quality and productivity; (c) Encouragement of planned growth and development of urban and rural areas to ensure the most effective use of agricultural land, resources and capital; and (d) Fostering of ownership and operation of agricultural land by resident farmers". Allowing solar use on agricultural land is violating this Statute by (1) not using it for the production of food or other agricultural products, (2) converting it to another use, (3) not ensuring the most effective use, and (4) by not allowing resident farmers to operate it.

Regarding Summit Lake Solar's Joint Application for Site Permits dated January 2025 – section 3.3 and 3.4 on page 17 – Prime Farmland Rule: In my opinion, the stated reasons for finding no alternative site were inadequate. How could Geronimo not find an alternative spot for this project in the entire state of Minnesota that wasn't Prime farmland? That is completely unacceptable. First off, they were enticed by a Minnesota state sales tax exemption which would be enormous on a multi-million dollar project. But I'm guessing they want this exact spot on the map primarily because of our energy infrastructure. This is the driving factor that keeps costs low for Geronimo. The land around the ideal infrastructure is flat and easy to build on, which is another key factor in cost effectiveness. The fact that Minnesota is in the bottom 10 states for peak sun hours and ranked 43 out of 50 (according to Integrate Sun, a leading solar developer) must have little to no bearing in the site selection. As long as their top profit factors fit in their projection and their submission passes through the PUC, the fact that it would be sitting on Prime farmland is mute to them – because they are not farmers!

Keeping Minnesota Prime farmland in tact should be the top priority – not Geronimo's business model. Minnesota and Nobles County should not have to sacrifice Prime farmland in order for this one TRILLION dollar company (<https://bam.brookfield.com>) to add a project to their portfolio. They literally have projects all over the country and the world. Geronimo could take this anywhere and should be looking harder for a more suitable spot. According to a Minnesota Commerce Department supplement, Solar Energy Production and Prime Farmland Guidance for Evaluating Prudent and Feasible Alternatives May 19, 2020 (<https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/eera/web/doc/13929>), the subject of using agricultural land for solar use is of great concern and calls for many steps by the Applicants to make their case for overtaking Prime farmland. I don't feel they have put enough effort into finding a suitable alternative site. In addition, the following criteria must be met if Geronimo seeks an exemption or variance from this process: enforcement of the rule would impose an excessive burden upon the applicant; granting the variance would not adversely affect the public. Reading residents are being imposed with the burden – not the applicant. And it's obvious the public would be adversely affected, as shown with the many comments and opposition at the hearing. This project does not fit the bill for an exemption or variance.

By the way, I called the Minnesota Department of Ag Farmland Protection representative Mark Zastoupil at 651-201-6369 on April 8th to inquire about ways we can protect our farmland from solar here in Nobles County. There was no answer and was directed to voicemail. To date, I have not received a return call.

I am a newcomer to this game by way of the proposed data center. I hadn't even heard of the solar

project until it was mentioned by Geronimo when presenting the wind projects along with the data center at their open house. And while attending the solar public hearing on April 6th, I learned that this all actually started back in 2016. That was a shock, just as it was to a few of those that verbally commented that evening and during the virtual meeting the following evening. In addition, others stated that they live very near the border of the proposed area and haven't even been contacted by Geronimo. That doesn't sound like a "farmer-friendly and community-driven approach" or that they are "continuously communicating and providing transparent updates for local residents", as their website claims.

I support the non-participating property owners surrounding the project that are voicing concerns because it very well could be me that is in their shoes. And with the rate of expansion of such projects, it still could be me. I would never surrender our farmland to solar or wind, but unfortunately, as we see here, those around us could cave to the enticement of money. We are true neighbors supporting neighbors. Not the kind that try to rectify wrongs by having to draw up a "Good Neighbor Agreement" and tape mouths shut with hush money. Truth be told, the love of money is the root of all evil.

Since learning of this project, I've been researching about it as much as I can. It's not easy to find the cons along with the pros because so many of the solar panel companies are biased and geared toward promoting their products. I would like to reiterated what one of the Geronimo reps told us at the April 6th meeting. I believe it was Victoria Orchard that said it would probably take about a year after the decommissioning process to return the land back to tillable farm ground. But in the same breath she said there aren't enough projects of this size around the country that have gotten to their end of life to be decommissioned yet, so there really isn't enough examples to actually know how long it takes and what the final outcome will be. Are we the guinea pigs that must wait it out and see?

Is that also what will happen for the controversy around chemical leaching? Victoria mentioned that when there is testing done for chemical leaching, they use just a small portion of the panel. And even though most panels contain heavy metals such as lead and cadmium, they haven't found any problems with leaching. She was always specific to say "small portion", but what is the outcome when you have more than a small portion of the panel? What about an entire panel, hundreds of panels or thousands of panels that would be used here? What are those results? Is the testing done by a third party? Where is that data? Please show it to me. Every solar project owner should be taking periodic soil tests for heavy metals every 6 months for the entire lifetime of any given project. Have they been doing that with their existing projects? We should ask them to test all the sites they own as they must be in various stages of life. That would give us a better picture of what is going into the soil, if anything, and could rule out one of the many topics of concern. Has the state been doing this testing and currently has data available? I would certainly be interested in reading about it.

I commend Geronimo on the re-submission application of the project for trying to come up with a better design with farther set-backs and re-positioning the BESS. It's somewhat better, although it is still much too close to homes. I would ask though, why did they not take any of that into consideration on the first go-round? It's as though they hadn't even thought about the people living in the area, which is apprehensible. That should be the First and Foremost consideration – the People with homes nearby. As one Reading community member commented, Geronimo has directly caused anxiety to many residents' lives already, simply by barging into our quiet little community. Geronimo is trying to confiscate Nobles County property that has been used in agriculture for the last 180 years – since the first settlement near The Graham Lakes back in 1846. We are residents here – Geronimo is not. They don't know what our way of life was before they arrived and they will

never see how their project will drastically change the way of life for everyone here during and after it. What will Geronimo do with the land that they purchased? Will they ever allow it to go back to ag use again?

One might think this is all in the name of meeting "green" guidelines by a certain deadline to be in compliance of our so-called government. But there is no reason (especially not to make a wealthy company even more wealthy) to take almost 2000 acres of the most fertile farmland out of production for 30 years for the sake of "green" energy. The wind towers have already taken enough Prime farmland and have caused enough problems already. Take the solar somewhere that is zoned for it. Could they build solar canopies over the parking lots in Worthington as is so common in the south? I'm not the expert; they claim to be. There must be a better place than zoned Prime agricultural land!

The Union workers are lobbying for this project to happen so they get signed on for another job. But do they realize that this one project is essentially taking someone else's job away by doing that – and for 30 years! The landowners (or tenants) were actually making a living themselves from the land and in some years producing a commodity that could be used in making ethanol and biodiesel, which are also considered "green". Taking away this land definitely has a trickle down effect. Not to only a farmer, but a seed salesman, machinery salesman, fertilizer/chemical salesman, agronomist, rock-picker, ground applicator, grain handler, feed grinder, trucker or railroad line, butcher or packing plant, elevator, ethanol plant, locker or grocery store before it finally gets to the consumer. All of these jobs are affected when you steal the land away from it's original purpose of agriculture. But not just for the life of a one-year construction project – these jobs would be affected for 30 years.

Please keep the well-planned agricultural zoning as it has been defined and find a true industrial zone for this solar project. It does not belong on the rich land surrounding a community with growing families that do not want it.

Thank you for your time,
Shari Lenz

Attach a File



[summit_lake_puc_comment_41826.docx](#)

32.34 KB • DOCX

My husband and I crop farm and live in Lismore Township. I am strongly opposed to this solar and battery project being placed on fertile farmland and/or anywhere near homes. The area proposed has never been zoned for anything but agriculture and is currently being properly used for that purpose. Not only is this particular land farmland, most of it is PRIME farmland. It takes a special person to keep this kind of soil in top condition - it takes the dedication of a true farmer. Those that are handing their land over to this solar project should be ashamed to think that money is going to better their lives while the fertile land they once took care of stands stagnant. That land will be dying a slow death for a staggering 30 years and in my eyes so will they. If they were a true farmer, it would be nauseating for them to see the soil sit idle and not be used for its intended purpose.

According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, "*Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. A recent trend in land use in some areas has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. In an effort to identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local government organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the protection of the Nation's food supply.*"

This shows that our country's land stewards went to such an extent as to label and inventory the land that is needed to protect the nations' food supply. We, as Minnesotans, are blessed to have it right in our backyards, yet here we are talking about letting a huge corporation take almost 2000 acres out of production for an entire generation! Not just a quarter, not a section, but 3 sections of land! Land fit for food production should be seated as number one at all times. There should be no reason for anything to have precedence over food production, "green" or otherwise.

In 1984 the Agricultural Land Preservation Policy Act established a program to preserve agricultural land. Why would those that wrote this act dedicate their time and resources to do so? Because they saw the need to protect our precious ag land, especially Prime ag land. Minnesota Statute 17.80 State Agricultural Land Preservation and Conservation Policy Subdivision 1 reads "*It is the policy of the state to preserve agricultural land and conserve its long-term use for the production of food and other agricultural products by: (a) Protection of agricultural land and certain parcels of open space land from conversion to other uses; (b) Conservation and enhancement of soil and water resources to ensure their long-term quality and productivity; (c) Encouragement of planned growth and development of urban and rural areas to ensure the most effective use of agricultural land, resources and capital; and (d) Fostering of ownership and operation of agricultural land by resident farmers*".

Allowing solar use on agricultural land is violating this Statute by **(1) not using it for the production of food or other agricultural products, (2) converting it to another use, (3) not ensuring the most effective use, and (4) by not allowing resident farmers to operate it.**

Regarding Summit Lake Solar's Joint Application for Site Permits dated January 2025 - section 3.3 and 3.4 on page 17 - Prime Farmland Rule: In my opinion, the stated reasons for finding no

alternative site were inadequate. How could Geronimo not find an alternative spot for this project in the entire state of Minnesota that wasn't Prime farmland? That is completely unacceptable. First off, they were enticed by a Minnesota state sales tax exemption which would be enormous on a multi-million dollar project. But I'm guessing they want this exact spot on the map primarily because of our energy infrastructure. This is the driving factor that keeps costs low for Geronimo. The land around the ideal infrastructure is flat and easy to build on, which is another key factor in cost effectiveness. The fact that Minnesota is in the bottom 10 states for peak sun hours and ranked 43 out of 50 (according to Integrate Sun, a leading solar developer) must have little to no bearing in the site selection. As long as their top profit factors fit in their projection and their submission passes through the PUC, the fact that it would be sitting on Prime farmland is mute to them - because they are not farmers!

Keeping Minnesota Prime farmland in tact should be the top priority - not Geronimo's business model. Minnesota and Nobles County should not have to sacrifice Prime farmland in order for this one TRILLION dollar company (<https://bam.brookfield.com>) to add a project to their portfolio. They literally have projects all over the country and the world. Geronimo could take this anywhere and should be looking harder for a more suitable spot. According to a Minnesota Commerce Department supplement, *Solar Energy Production and Prime Farmland Guidance for Evaluating Prudent and Feasible Alternatives May 19, 2020* (<https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/eera/web/doc/13929>), the subject of using agricultural land for solar use is of great concern and calls for many steps by the Applicants to make their case for overtaking Prime farmland. I don't feel they have put enough effort into finding a suitable alternative site. In addition, the following criteria must be met if Geronimo seeks an exemption or variance from this process: enforcement of the rule would impose an excessive burden upon the applicant; granting the variance would not adversely affect the public. Reading residents are being imposed with the burden - not the applicant. And it's obvious the public would be adversely affected, as shown with the many comments and opposition at the hearing. This project does not fit the bill for an exemption or variance.

By the way, I called the Minnesota Department of Ag Farmland Protection representative Mark Zastoupil at 651-201-6369 on April 8th to inquire about ways we can protect our farmland from solar here in Nobles County. There was no answer and was directed to voicemail. To date, I have not received a return call.

I am a newcomer to this game by way of the proposed data center. I hadn't even heard of the solar project until it was mentioned by Geronimo when presenting the wind projects along with the data center at their open house. And while attending the solar public hearing on April 6th, I learned that this all actually started back in 2016. That was a shock, just as it was to a few of those that verbally commented that evening and during the virtual meeting the following evening. In addition, others stated that they live very near the border of the proposed area and haven't even been contacted by Geronimo. That doesn't sound like a "farmer-friendly and community-driven approach" or that they are "continuously communicating and providing transparent updates for local residents", as their website claims.

I support the non-participating property owners surrounding the project that are voicing concerns because it very well could be me that is in their shoes. And with the rate of expansion of such projects, it still could be me. I would never surrender our farmland to solar or wind, but unfortunately, as we see here, those around us could cave to the enticement of money. We are true neighbors supporting neighbors. Not the kind that try to rectify wrongs by having to draw up a "Good Neighbor Agreement" and tape mouths shut with hush money. Truth be told, the love of money is the root of all evil.

Since learning of this project, I've been researching about it as much as I can. It's not easy to find the cons along with the pros because so many of the solar panel companies are biased and geared toward promoting their products. I would like to reiterated what one of the Geronimo reps told us at the April 6th meeting. I believe it was Victoria Orchard that said it would probably take about a year after the decommissioning process to return the land back to tillable farm ground. But in the same breath she said there aren't enough projects of this size around the country that have gotten to their end of life to be decommissioned yet, so there really isn't enough examples to actually know how long it takes and what the final outcome will be. Are we the guinea pigs that must wait it out and see?

Is that also what will happen for the controversy around chemical leaching? Victoria mentioned that when there is testing done for chemical leaching, they use just a small portion of the panel. And even though most panels contain heavy metals such as lead and cadmium, they haven't found any problems with leaching. She was always specific to say "small portion", but what is the outcome when you have more than a small portion of the panel? What about an entire panel, hundreds of panels or thousands of panels that would be used here? What are those results? Is the testing done by a third party? Where is that data? Please show it to me. Every solar project owner should be taking periodic soil tests for heavy metals every 6 months for the entire lifetime of any given project. Have they been doing that with their existing projects? We should ask them to test all the sites they own as they must be in various stages of life. That would give us a better picture of what is going into the soil, if anything, and could rule out one of the many topics of concern. Has the state been doing this testing and currently has data available? I would certainly be interested in reading about it.

I commend Geronimo on the re-submission application of the project for trying to come up with a better design with farther set-backs and re-positioning the BESS. It's somewhat better, although it is still much too close to homes. I would ask though, why did they not take any of that into consideration on the first go-round? It's as though they hadn't even thought about the people living in the area, which is apprehensible. That should be the First and Foremost consideration - the People with homes nearby. As one Reading community member commented, Geronimo has directly caused anxiety to many residents' lives already, simply by barging into our quiet little community. Geronimo is trying to confiscate Nobles County property that has been used in agriculture for the last 180 years - since the first settlement near The Graham Lakes back in 1846. We are residents here - Geronimo is not. They don't know what our way of life was before they arrived and they will never see how their project will drastically change the way of life for everyone here during and after it. What will Geronimo do with the land that they purchased? Will they ever allow it to go back to ag use again?

One might think this is all in the name of meeting "green" guidelines by a certain deadline to be in compliance of our so-called government. But there is no reason (especially not to make a wealthy company even more wealthy) to take almost 2000 acres of the most fertile farmland out of production for 30 years for the sake of "green" energy. The wind towers have already taken enough Prime farmland and have caused enough problems already. Take the solar somewhere that is zoned for it. Could they build solar canopies over the parking lots in Worthington as is so common in the south? I'm not the expert; they claim to be. There must be a better place than zoned Prime agricultural land!

The Union workers are lobbying for this project to happen so they get signed on for another job. But do they realize that this one project is essentially taking someone else's job away by doing that - and for 30 years! The landowners (or tenants) were actually making a living themselves from the land and in some years producing a commodity that could be used in making ethanol and biodiesel, which are also considered "green". Taking away this land definitely has a trickle down effect. Not to only a farmer, but a seed salesman, machinery salesman, fertilizer/chemical salesman, agronomist, rock-picker, ground applicator, grain handler, feed grinder, trucker or railroad line, butcher or packing plant, elevator, ethanol plant, locker or grocery store before it finally gets to the consumer. All of these jobs are affected when you steal the land away from it's original purpose of agriculture. But not just for the life of a one-year construction project - these jobs would be affected for 30 years.

Please keep the well-planned agricultural zoning as it has been defined, and find a true industrial zone for this solar project. It does not belong on the rich land surrounding a community with growing families that do not want it.

Thank you for your time,

Shari Lenz

From: [Kelli Brake](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Docket 25-88 and 25-89
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 11:24:19 PM

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I am writing in regards to Docket 25-88 and Docket 25-89 and my strong OPPOSITION to the proposed Solar and BESS projects.

A few points I would like to address are:

- This proposed project would have many life changing impacts on the people, and these changes are not for the better. Lives have already been impacted by the light and noise from nearby infrastructure. Adding more infrastructure to it is only going to magnify these problems. No matter how many fences or "regulations" are put in place. Continuous artificial lighting and constant noise have already negatively affected residence quality of life.

- Additional health concerns arise when you look at water supply and toxins leaching from solar panels. I have heard many reports of ground water being contaminated or the ground being left so toxic that food can no longer be grown. This is important information that should be studied and looked at closer. Especially on a project of this magnitude and in such close proximity to so many people. Do the proper testing and wait for long term results. No amount of money is more valuable than a persons' life, health and well-being.

- Environmental impact is inevitable. The land would forever be altered - from structural land disruption and water & drainage systems, to habitat and wildlife disturbances. There is an active eagles nest on property right next to the proposed solar panels. These types of facilities (solar panels, battery storage, data centers) create "heat islands" that reach for miles. Having an impact on humans, animals, and also plants. A disruption to an environment is a disruption to life in all forms.

- Left unaltered by industrial companies, this land has the ability to produce for an infinite amount of years. Allowing construction of this magnitude immediately puts massive limits, and perhaps even an expiration date on productivity and value of the land.

Bottom line, people need food and clean water to survive. Protect the environment, and protect the people. Do NOT allow this.

Thank you,
Jordan and Kelli Brake

Wilmont, MN

April 17, 2026

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

Re: Proposed Solar Energy Generating System and Battery Energy Storage System – Reading, Minnesota

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Kimberly Braun, and I am writing on behalf of myself and my husband, Andrew Braun. We are residents of Summit Lake Township in Reading, Minnesota, and our home is located at 17193 Monroe Ave, Reading, MN 56165. Our property is in very close proximity to the proposed solar energy generating system and associated battery energy storage system.

I respectfully submit the following comments in response to the Commission's questions:

1. Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy generating system?

At this time, I do not support granting a site permit for the proposed solar project as currently planned. While I understand the importance of renewable energy, the scale and location of this project raise serious concerns for those of us living nearby. Our home and acreage will be directly impacted, and I am deeply concerned about the long-term effects on our property value. It feels as though we may bear the burden of this project through increased taxes and reduced property desirability, while receiving little to no benefit in return.

Additionally, there is concern about the cumulative impact of multiple large-scale developments in the area, including a proposed data center that we strongly oppose. The combination of industrial-scale projects in a rural residential and agricultural area fundamentally changes the character of our community.

2. Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed battery energy storage system?

I also have significant concerns regarding the battery energy storage system. While I understand these systems are intended to support energy reliability, there are safety and environmental risks that need to be more clearly addressed. Potential fire hazards, chemical leaks, and emergency response preparedness are all serious issues—especially in a rural area where emergency services may be limited.

Given the proximity to our home, I am not comfortable with the risks associated with this type of facility without stronger assurances, clearer safety protocols, and enforceable protections.

3. If granted, what additional conditions or requirements should be included in the site permits?

If the Commission does decide to grant permits for either project, I strongly urge you to include the following conditions:

- **Minimum setback requirement:** A minimum setback of **1,000 feet from any residence or dwelling**, to better protect nearby homeowners from visual, noise, and safety impacts.

- **Property value protection:** A formal guarantee or compensation program for homeowners whose property values are negatively affected.
- **Environmental safeguards:** Ongoing monitoring of soil, water, and air quality to prevent pollution or contamination.
- **Water usage and drainage plans:** Clear plans addressing water use, runoff, and potential impacts to local water resources.
- **Decommissioning plan:** A fully funded, enforceable plan to remove all infrastructure and restore the land at the end of the project's life.
- **Emergency response planning:** Detailed coordination with local emergency services, including funding and training for potential battery-related incidents.
- **Limit on future expansion:** Protections to prevent unchecked expansion that could further surround existing homes and properties.

Finally, I am concerned about broader impacts to our community. If farmland continues to be converted into industrial energy production, we risk losing the agricultural character of our township. I worry that more farmers will feel pressured to sell, and that over time, properties like ours will become isolated and surrounded by development.

There are also unanswered questions about potential health impacts. While solar facilities are often described as low-risk, long-term exposure to associated infrastructure, including inverters, battery systems, and potential chemical hazards, should be carefully studied and clearly communicated to residents.

In closing, I ask the Commission to carefully consider the real and lasting impacts on the people who live here. We are not opposed to progress, but it must be balanced with fairness, safety, and respect for existing residents and their livelihoods.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Braun', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Braun

Andrew Braun

17193 Monroe Ave

Reading, MN 56165

From: [Kim Braun](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Docket 25-88/25-89
Date: Friday, April 17, 2026 11:39:20 AM
Attachments: [Scanned Document 20260417 112702.pdf](#)

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Here is my letter referencing docket 25-88/25/89

Kimberly Braun
17193 Monroe Ave
Reading, MN 56165
507-360-3043

From: sharpcopier@1officesolution.com <sharpcopier@1officesolution.com>
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2026 10:27 AM
To: Kim Braun <kbraun@sondfarms.com>
Subject: Scanned Document from Son-D-Farms

From: [Anna Deitchler](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Docket 25-88/25-89
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 6:05:56 PM
Attachments: [Image.png](#)

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Please focus your comments on information that will help answer the following questions:

1. ■ Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy generating system?
2. ■ Should the Commission grant a site permit for the proposed battery energy storage system?
3. ■ If granted, what additional conditions or requirements should be included in the site permits?

Hello,

I am a resident of Reading, MN.

A concern I have regarding an approved site permit for this solar energy system is that it will generate energy that cannot be used in the immediate area and will need to be transferred along transmission lines. Those lines are already overloaded with electrical traffic causing curtailment of the wind turbines currently in the area so adding additional energy collection is a waste. This project, while not directly tied to the proposed data center, is solely dependent on that data center as the end user of the electricity generated. The data center should not get approved and so the solar would be misplaced and unnecessary.

That brings up the BESS unit as well, the idea that energy can be stored when not needed and sent along transmission lines when freed up seems nice until you talk to Geronimo and find out that BESS can only store about 4 hours worth of power. That's not nearly worth tearing up thousands of acres of good farm ground for 4 hours of power that has no home when the data center project gets denied.

These projects will not add value to the area, they only support a data center the majority of residents are strongly opposed to.

If these projects were approved against the locals wishes, there should be strict

setbacks of 1,000 feet from homes and roads. They should also have natural pathways or land bridges developed through them to allow wildlife to pass through so they won't have to walk around a 2000 acre fenced compound that they naturally migrated through to reach feeding areas and shelter.

Regarding the land "resting" during the period of time the project is proposed for, when the solar project is decommissioned in 25-30 years, they will rip 8-10 feet pylons out of the ground, upsetting the natural balance of top soils and lower soils and will create sinkage, water drain issues from loose ground, and settling which will cause the land to not be farmable for many, many years until that natural balance is restored. Imagine a 25,000+ lb tractor driving along land riddled with 8-10ft divots.

Please deny the permits for these projects and allow this land, zoned as agricultural preservation, to continue to be farmed undisturbed.

Thank you,

Anna Deitchler

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 4:52:58 PM

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Name *	Makayla Brunk
Address	☐ 28210 200th St. Reading, MN 56165
Provide the docket's number.	25-88

Leave a comment on the docket. *

I was born and raised in Nobles County and have lived here all of my life. As a resident of the area that is going to be impacted by these projects, I am writing to let you know I am not in favor of these projects and ask that you deny the site permits that are being requested.

My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents have all been farmers. Even though I do not currently farm, I appreciate the land and how it has been protected for many years. I have always dreamed of beginning my own agricultural related business, located on my parents property near Reading, MN. I want to start a flower business, and in order for that to be viable in this area, it would require pollinators, uncontaminated land, and uncontaminated water. Due to the harmful threats that solar panels and the BESS system would bring to this area, this project has been put on hold. The American Dream is being threatened, all because a big company wants to come in and put an industrial project in an agricultural zone.

As a young child, I was in awe any time we spotted a bald eagle in other areas of the United States. There are finally some bald eagles nesting in our area. These bald eagles and our local wildlife is being threatened and we need to protect them.

As a young adult who wants to purchase my own acreage some day, I had hoped to stay in the Reading area to be around family. If this project is approved, I would not purchase a property anywhere near solar panels or a BESS battery storage system. You are drastically harming the property value of our friends, family, and neighbors and deterring others from wanting to move to our area.

As a young woman who wants to have her own family some day, I would not want to raise children or have a family near either of these projects. These projects will negatively impact on our community and future generations.

I love wildflowers, watching sunsets, and living in an area surrounded by fields. Watching the changing of the seasons is important to me. I never dreamt that this area could be consumed and ruined by solar panels and a BESS battery system. I never dreamt that the area I call home would become an area I would no longer want to live in. The fields I have grown up watching change with the seasons is at risk of being gone forever.

Please do not grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy generating system.

Please do not grant a site permit for the proposed battery energy storage system.

Sincerely,

Makayla Brunk
Nobles County Resident

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 10:06:55 PM

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Name *	JoAnn Burkard
Address	☐ 17679 McCall Ave READING, MN 56165 United States
Phone Number	(507) 360-6811
Email	rjburkard@hotmail.com
Provide the docket's number.	25-89 25-88

Leave a comment on the docket. *

PUC

You should not grant a permit to build the summit lake solar. They should not use our prime farmland. They have disrupted our community and upset neighbors. They are only listening to the few people that sold out to them and as of yet ignored concerns of nonparticipating residents. We do not want these people and their project.

As far as the battery system we don't want them or their battery.

If they would build this project the set back from nonparticipating residents home must be 1000 ft. That distance would at least maintain some freedom and space which is the reason people choose to live in the country. This would leave room for nature and give geronimo plenty of space to plant all the trees needed to shield us from to eyesore. Lastly the large set back would help maintain property values that will be destroyed if the current proposed 300 ft is used. The 300 ft set back would only fuel a fire that is going to be difficult enough to extinguish given the strained relationship geronimo has with residents. Residents are fearful if this project gets built it opens the door to more panels, overhead power lines, wind turbines and etc. It would end our farming community making it difficult to continue feeding America.

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 10:28:13 PM

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Name * Haley Slater

Address ☐ 19820 FELLOWS AVENUE
RUSHMORE, MN 56168
United States

Email haley.a.slater@gmail.com

Provide the docket's number. 25-88

Leave a comment on the docket. *

I am in strong opposition of the Summit Lake Solar Facility and Battery Energy Storage System. I do not believe that the Commission should grant a site permit for the proposed solar energy generating system and proposed battery energy storage system based on the following implications: The negative implications this system (when referring to system, I am implying the project of the proposed Summit Lake Solar Facility and Battery Energy Storage System) has upon human health and quality of life. While many of the impacts are unclear, the impacts that are guaranteed, are all negative to the surrounding residents. The constant hum of an industrial noise introduced into a rural location greatly changes and degrades quality of life for the surrounding residents, as many residents have spoken to or submitted comments expressing their concerns regarding level of noise the system is projected to emit. Developing large scale infrastructure within a rural area will permanently alter the character of the area, even upon decommissioning, which is not set to take place for 30 years after project completion. This in turn, decreases property value to the surrounding residents, degrading their quality of life and decreases financial security. These effects are not temporary and pose real and lasting threats to surrounding residents. Human safety concerns around the system also poses a real threat to negatively impact quality of life.

The environmental impacts the system poses to the land are substantial and potentially infinite. The project creates long-term soil disruption and habitat alteration. Neither of which are able to be restored in a timely manner, if ever, after decommissioning the project in 30 years. The level of compaction that will occur to the land will takes years to recover from to return the area to productive farmland able to produce a crop. The chemicals left behind in the soil from years of development are unknown, which indicates that there is no guarantee that the land once returned to agriculture land will ever be able to produce a crop that is healthy or viable for human or animal consumption. Once this land is converted, the impact is permanent & extends beyond the lifetime of the project.

The local community and rural residents are unfairly and unjustly being prompted and demanded that they absorb these environmental and quality of life costs for little to potentially no benefit to them.

Should this project go through, the setback ordinances need to be readdressed, first and foremost. 150-300feet is simply not far enough to mitigate the negative health implications to humans and animals. Existing residents should have absolute and final say how far away the nearest panel and

battery is from the center-point of their home. Furthermore, the current proposed project is set to develop 1,900 acres of land with 1,400 acres of that to be directly developed for the solar & battery project – this is simply unacceptable. Per public comment and answer session on April 6th, 2026, the system only holds 4hrs of usable power per battery/20 acres of developed land. This would only produce and store 280hrs of usable energy for the area, which would NOT directly benefit the local residents, nor be able to be utilized by the local substation and transmission lines nor are we ever currently without power for anywhere near 280hrs – which indicates a very low to non-existent need for a system of this size in our area. The size of the system needs to be relevant to the "need" of the local projected users. Per Geronimo, the energy captured and stored by this system is solely intended for the nearest users, indicating the local community, and that need is not there currently nor is it projected to be there essentially ever. A site of 40 acres with solar panels and 1 battery would suffice the area, the residents, the local substation and current transmission lines. The need for anything beyond that, is simply not there, making this entire project unbalanced and an unequitable outcome for the community as a whole.

The failure to meet legal standards of public interest and resource protection should be enough to stop the permitting of the Summit Lake Solar Facility and Battery Energy Storage System immediately.

I am respectfully requesting that the Commission deny the applications based on failure to meet statutory siting criteria under Minn. Stat. §216E.03, particularly with respect to impacts on human settlement and land-based economies. Approval on the current record would not be supported by substantial evidence and would be inconsistent with the Commission's statutory obligations.

Thank you,
Haley Slater

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Sunday, April 19, 2026 10:52:33 PM

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Name *	Rodney JR Burkard
Address	☐ 29219 290th Street Worthington , Minnesota 56187 United States
Phone Number	(507) 360-1219
Email	rodburkjr@hotmail.com
Provide the docket's number.	25-88 and 25-89

Leave a comment on the docket. *

This message is in response to dockets 25-88 and 25-89.

My name is Rodney Burkard JR, I grew up 2 miles north of Reading, Minnesota. My parents still reside there. Summit lake and its wildlife area are just on the west side of their property. The area has been a staple in our family for nature outings and pictures. I have enjoyed deer and pheasant hunting that area in the past and have just begun to teach and show my children about wildlife, and the conservation of. With that comes with me showing them how to handle firearms and I wish to continue hunting there. The problem I have is if the solar panel array that is proposed for the area, that would completely box that area in and prohibit the natural flow of wildlife coming and going within the area. Not only the deer, but I feel the pheasants and other waterfowl would be deterred from the area if you have fenced off solar panels surrounding.

I also feel that covering productive farm ground, or any ground that is not completely covered in rocks for that matter is completely foolish. Solar is known for being one of the least effective or least efficient way to conduct electricity.

If you look at the fine print from other solar projects, you'll find the ground is completely unfit for anything after the life of the panels. Trace amounts chemicals and other things leaching off the panels and entering the ground and subsequently the ground water pose hazards and health risks to the surrounding residents.

I vote no on the solar panel array, I vote no on the battery storage system. And I feel the commision should as well. And if you are foolish enough to throw away perfectly good ground, gamble with the residents water supply, block the flow of wildlife, and inhibit nature. I feel a setback from all roads and residences should be at LEAST 1500 minimum.

From: [Wufoo](#)
To: [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Submitted Public Comment Form
Date: Saturday, April 18, 2026 2:36:44 PM

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Provide the docket's number.	25-88 and 25-89

Leave a comment on the docket. *

I live in Lismore township where with help from my wife, two sons, brother and nephew we run a crop farming operation. I am strongly opposed to this solar and battery project being placed on fertile farmland and/or anywhere near homes. The area proposed has never been zoned for anything but agriculture and is currently being properly used for that purpose. Every time I drive by one of these solar farms that are placed on what looks like highly productive farmland it makes me wonder if they could've possibly found a more sensible place for these structures like over a parking lot, on a roof or even an odd shaped parcel. Replacing something so critical to our society like productive farmland used for food and energy(biofuels) with solar panels seems like such a thoughtless maybe even lazy idea. Then it got personal, they're being considered for Nobles county, my county.

After just recently getting the news about the solar/battery project being considered for Nobles county my first thought was to feel concerned for the people that live LITERALLY IN and AROUND the project and how this will adversely affect their lives. So I started to do a little research and was shocked to find out that myself and nearly everyone in the vicinity of this mammoth estimated 1,900 acre project would also be negatively effected. We've all heard stories of the decline in residential real-estate values situated by large solar projects such as this one, which are all arguably true, but what about the changes in real-estate values of agricultural property?

There are studies that have been done that show up to a 19% increase in surrounding farmland prices resulting from large solar projects, like this study done at Virginia: TechVirginia Tech study sheds light on solar farm impacts to property values | Virginia Tech News | Virginia Tech <https://share.google/Yn3zMCO8agRLRuYkK>. Highlighted in this study : On average, agricultural and vacant land within two miles of the site saw a 19.4 percent increase in value. Chen said this indicates that the value of land with high potential for future solar leasing has risen considerably.

This subject has also been addressed with similar findings by the farm bureau: Solar Energy Expansion and its Impacts on Rural Communities | Market Intel | American Farm Bureau Federation <https://share.google/FFbX6lI8Mfx3MpRG7>. This article gives a good explanation on how farmland

values and lease rates are forced artificially higher due to neighboring solar projects.

A couple reasons why a Large solar/battery project like this that lowers residential values will actually raise Ag land values. The first way is the area very close to the project is seen as future solar development which features the opportunity for a much higher short term return on the land than traditional farming can produce. The next less obvious reason for surrounding ag land increase is 1031 like-kind exchange which gives the solar leasee/seller a tax shelter if they reinvest the proceeds of the sale or in some instances lease, like a solar lease, in the same kind of property, in this instance, farmland. This article does a good job explaining how it works: Leveraging Clean Energy for Section 1031 Tax-Deferred Exchanges <https://blog.visitcss.com/insights/leveraging-clean-energy-for-1031-exchanges>. These solar leases are all done at many times the price of what this land is worth when used as farmland so the recipient of a solar lease or sale has the incentive do one of these 1031 exchanges which is great for that individual because they can take the proceeds and purchase most likely many more acres of land than what they sold. So 1,900 acres could turn into competition for much more, possibly 3 times more so possibly close to 6,000 acres of purchasing power resulting from this one project. Another issue this project will bring is the loss of farmland available to rent. Any farming operation in the general area of the project will have a smaller pool of land available to lease so will be forced to compete for land a bit farther out of their out of their area forced to raise rental rates just to stay in business. So considering all of this it's clear that this project will result in significantly higher ag land values in a large surrounding area.

So what's the big problem with rising farmland values? Well, let me tell you what the problems are. First off rising farmland values only helps a farmer when they're ready to sell. If you're trying to make a living by farming, rising farmland prices brings nothing but problems. Rising farmland values brings higher property taxes which is especially tough on beginning farmers trying to buy their first parcel. Higher cash rental rates will hurt all farmers but especially beginning farmers who don't have the equity yet to purchase. More competition for farmland sales will effect all farmers by being forced to compete against 1031 exchanges, causing many to go without farmland purchase, forcing them out of business. Farmers work with a very thin margin, at time less than 5%, so adding any additional small burden can have a devastating impact.

This project will be devastating to all the farmers in Nobles county and the surrounding area by artificially raising land values higher than what is sustainable by traditional Agriculture use. This is especially true for our young beginning farmers that we all place so much hope in for the future of farming in Nobles County. This project all but kills the opportunity for any young farmer that currently has the calling to try farming in Noble County. This project puts our precious nobles county farmland in a category similar to an urban development designation which should never be done here. I'm sure when the Land was placed in Ag preservation zones, it was done to prevent some future event like this from taking place putting our land up for sale to the highest bidder regardless of it's final use resulting in an undue burden on all the hard working farmers trying to make a living in our county.

I hope you'll take my comments under careful consideration and rule against allowing this life altering project to proceed as proposed for all of it's adverse effects. Thank you, Mark Lenz, Nobles County Resident.
