

Written Public Comments Received on the
Scope of the Environmental Assessment for the
Summit Lake Project
Docket Nos. ESS 25-88 and GS-25-89

Public Comments Received by Staff

General Public

1. Deb Rogers
2. Dwayne Weinrank
3. Russ Penning
4. Phillip Joens
5. Melanie Penning
6. Carolyn Penning
7. Nolan Rogers
8. Darrell Ponto
9. Becky Baumhoefner
10. Mark Rogers
11. David Ross
12. Malory Fritz
13. Allen Madison

Public Comments Electronically Filed in eDockets

Minnesota State Agencies

Agency	eDockets Number
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	20252-215789-01
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	20256-219615-01 and 20256-219615-02

Tribes

No comments

General Public

Danielle Rogers	20253-216894-01 and 20254-217273-01
Malory Fritz	20253-216210-01 and 20253-216210-02

Debra Rogers	<u>20253-216210-01</u> and <u>20253-216210-02</u> and <u>20253-216349-01</u>
Russell Penning	<u>20253-216349-05</u>
Becky Baumhoefner	<u>20253-216349-04</u> and <u>20256-219607-01</u>
Darla Fritz	<u>20253-216349-02</u> and <u>20253-216349-03</u>
Darrel Ponto	<u>20253-216448-01</u>
Merle Rabenberg	<u>20256-219552-01</u>
Loretta Halbur	<u>20256-219547-01</u>
Kathy Henderschiedt	<u>20256-219544-01</u>
Judy Christians	<u>20256-219607-02</u> and <u>20256-219607-03</u>



Public Inquiry re: Summit Lake Solar Project

From Deb Rogers <dprogers6163@yahoo.com>

Date Thu 2/27/2025 12:21 PM

To Weaver, Sam (He/Him/His) (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

[You don't often get email from dprogers6163@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Sent from my iPhone

I personally hope and pray this does not get approved..

This will ruin our small community and affect so many people..

This will trickle down to affect people that work at elevators seed sale men and the list goes on

Very disheartening

Deb Rogers

Public Meeting Comment Form

Summit Lake Solar and Battery Storage

PUC Dockets: IP-7153/GS-25-89 and IP-7153/ESS-25-88

Comment Period Closes June 5, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

Comments must be post-marked or received electronically by the comment deadline.

How to comment:

- Use the online comment form at: <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/public-comments>
- Email comments to: consumer.puc@state.mn.us (please indicate docket numbers 25-89 or 25-88 in subject field)
- Mail comments using this form or other stationary to:

Consumer Affairs Office
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Dwayne Wienck Phone: 507-372-7214
Street Address: 17288 Nystrom Ave
City: Reading State: Mn ZIP: 56165
Email: dcwien@frontier.com

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

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the environmental assessment?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the environmental assessment?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the environmental assessment?

I Feel you have picked the wrong site to construct Solar Panels and you will cause a negative impact on us physically and emotionally. You may cause some individuals to have emotional problems because most of us feel we have no control over what you want to do. I am totally against this project in the proposed area. Construct these panels on wasteland.

Dwayne Wierwille

Summit Lake Solar

From Russ Penning <russ.penning@gmail.com>

Date Wed 5/21/2025 8:21 PM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

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Docket number :IP-7153/GS-25-89 and IP-7153/ESS-25-88

I am writing this letter in regards to the proposed Summit Lake Solar project.

I am a farmer, cattle feeder, small business owner, father and husband. I have lived in Summit Lake Township most of my life. I have many concerns in regards to this project:

How safe is a battery storage facility of this size? Moss Landing facility had four fires and explosions since 2019.

Is there any concern having the battery storage facility close to a town?

What heavy metals do the solar panels contain that would be a potential hazard if broken by wind /hail? Are there ground water concerns?

Are the setbacks far enough from road right of ways for snow removal or flying debris from snow removal?

Are there going to be setbacks for our county tile systems for repair and maintenance?

Land in nobles county is some of the most productive farm ground in MN so why here?

What will it do to our property values and farm ground values?

How will it be taxed? The land that the panels sit on are no longer acres used for agriculture production? So they should be taxed as such?

We in rural MN already struggle to keep our main streets open for business. Most of our businesses are here to support agriculture production.

Removing acres from agriculture will negatively effect them as well.

Sincerely

Russell Penning

Solar Panel Bacteria

From Phillip Joens <phil.philsrepair@gmail.com>

Date Fri 5/23/2025 8:12 AM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

 1 attachment (336 KB)

Screenshot_23-5-2025_74630_haleakalasolar.com.jpeg;

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Good Morning Sam,

My name is Phillip Joens and I spoke last night at the Summit Lake Solar environmental assessment meeting. I brought up that I was concerned about the bacteria that develops on the solar panels. I have attached the web page that sparked this concern with me. I understand that there is no proof that this is or is not a concern because the large solar panel projects are only just beginning and there is a lot of unknown. I just think we should be sure that it is not a threat to humans and wildlife before we allow massive projects like this to begin construction. I live with my family, on the edge of the project and use an augured well as my water source. The drainage from this project flows directly towards my property which concerns me greatly. I believe at a minimum the project should be responsible to provide a clean and safe source of water, for instance a "Rural Water" connection, to residences within 5 miles of the project. I believe waiting until people are sick or worse deceased because of this potential issue would be irresponsible.

Thank you for hearing my concerns,

Phillip Joens

Public Comment re: Summit Lake Solar Project

From eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us <eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us>

Date Fri 5/23/2025 9:47 AM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

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Summit Lake Solar Project

Submitter Name: Melanie Penning

Submitter Email: melanie.penning@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (507) 360-3268

Comment:

I am submitting my comments regarding the Summit Lake Solar Project. I understand the need for "green energy". In order to create "green energy", it has negative impacts and carbon imprints so is it really "green"? In order to make the solar panels, the materials have to be mined and then they use toxic chemicals in manufacturing the solar panels. Once they get to their end of life, the disposal of the panels are also very concerning to me. The panels contain heavy metals and other harmful substances. If they are not properly disposed of, they create hazardous materials. All of this is creating a huge environmental concern. Once the solar panels end up here, do you take them out and return them to wherever they came from to be disposed of? The permit should state how and where these solar panels will be disposed of. My next concern is the BESS. I have read several reports regarding these exploding. At the public comments last night, it was not a concern to the applicants. They stated if a fire started in one of the cassettes, it would stay contained to that area. In my research, fires can be caused by temperature, cell defects, damage during installation, operational issues and lack of maintenance. One unique BESS hazard is battery fire and/or explosion caused by thermal runaway, or the rapid uncontrolled release of energy from a battery cell. This can cause the release of toxic gases and there is difficulty in extinguishing the fire. This is very concerning, especially with the placement of this storage building being so close to the town of Reading. The permit should state how dangerous the BESS is and how they will mitigate a fire or explosion and the impact it will have on the surrounding area. Thank you for including my concerns in the permit decision. Melanie Penning

Submit Date: 05/23/2025 02:47 PM

June 1, 2025

Docket Number IP-7153/GS-25-89

IP-7153/ESS-25-88

Minnesota Department of Commerce

85 7th Place East, Suite 280

St. Paul, MN. 55101

Sam Weaver:

I attended the public Info & Environmental Assessment meeting May 22, 2025 at the Worthington Event Center on the proposed Summit Lake Solar Facility.

My Family has farmed and lived in and around where these solar panels are proposed. We were a Foster Family for years and we always had to have our well water tested in order to use it for cooking etc. in our home. Not all families living in the rural areas around Reading and in the Village of Reading have Rural Water and they rely on their well water for use in their homes and for their livestock.

My concern is for these family's health down the road 10 to 20 years. We (you) can't predict weather events or the extent of damage to the panels and storage batteries! So what if an illness is detected that could be traced back to leaching from these panels into the ground water that families use for daily living and livestock? What about the combustibility of the batteries?

I am very concerned for my family and friends that live and work in the area. At a minimum, I feel all these wells and the ground water in the land involved around this area be tested **NOW** before any work is started so there is a baseline to compare results to down the road if necessary. Don't store the batteries so close to resident's homes.

On the human side of things, I would never agree to have a fence put up around my home to keep whatever in or out. To me it looks like a prison court yard. If you are being honest with the people living here, if the shoe were on the other foot, you would not agree to it either. My heart breaks for all of the residents who have little say in this matter. This is their HOME!!

Thank you for listening to me and for your time.

Public Comment re: Summit Lake Solar Project

From eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us <eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us>

Date Sun 6/1/2025 10:48 AM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

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Summit Lake Solar Project

Submitter Name: Nolan Rogers

Submitter Email:

Submitter Telephone: (507) 360-4152

Comment:

I believe the solar panels will be great for our area especially with the potential to graze sheep under them to keep the land being used for an agricultural production/purpose!

Submit Date: 06/01/2025 03:48 PM

Summit Lake Solar Concerns and Opposition Letter #2

Darrel Ponto – Reading MN

Dear Members of the MN PUC,

My name is Darrel Ponto, and I reside in Reading, MN. I am writing to express additional concerns and opposition to Summit Lake Solar, LLC, Solar Facility Docket No. IP-7153/GS-25-89 & 25-88. I previously submitted comments on March 15, 2025 on document ID 20253-216448-01.

My family and I live on 25369 190th Street in Reading, MN, in Summit Lake Township, Section 22, Northwest Quarter. We have been residents here since December 2008. Our home is located approximately 575 feet west of a portion of the proposed solar project in the Northeast quarter of Summit Lake Township, Section 22.

I would like to provide further comments regarding the topics discussed at the public meeting held on May 22nd at the Worthington Event Center. During the meeting, Mr. Russ Penning mentioned that he and others have been hired by the township in the past to push snow back during major snow events. The current setbacks for the solar project would not allow him to do this effectively, as the fencing and solar panels are positioned too close to the road. It was suggested that a proper setback for effective snow removal would be 300 to 500 feet. I have several photographs from a snow event in early to mid-February 2010, demonstrating the distance that snow had to be pushed back to make the roads passable for residents. These photos were taken at my property, but similar situations occurred on various roads within the proposed project area. Please see the attachment labeled "Snow plowed back by dozer in Summit Lake Section 22 NE Quarter February 2010" for more details.

Regarding the environmental impacts of this project, I would like to address additional concerns. In my previous letter, I provided photographic evidence of flooding incidents from April 2011, June 2018, June 2021, and June 2024. I also mentioned the risk of the panel assemblies being submerged in water, which could damage the panels and potentially leak contaminants into floodwaters that would affect local creeks, rivers, streams, lakes, and groundwater. I neglected to mention that our water supply comes from an older well that is 75 feet deep, located just 575 feet from the proposed project area that experiences flooding. This

well is our sole source of water, as the local rural water project was completed before we moved here.

Additionally, we have already experienced the impact of wind turbine construction in our rural area, followed by the complete rebuilding or repowering of these turbines due to parts obsolescence. This process has detracted from the beauty of our rural landscape.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to reconsider allowing the construction of this solar project in our small rural community.

Respectfully,

Darrel Ponto

Snow push back Summit Lake section 22 NW qtr February 2010
Nobles County Minnesota



Picture taken February 17, 2010



Picture taken February 27, 2010



Picture taken February 27, 2010



Picture taken February 27, 2010



Picture taken February 27, 2010



Picture taken February 27, 2010

Summit Lake Solar Project Docket No. IP-7155/GS-25-89/ESs-25-88

From Becky Baumhoefner <rbaumhoefner@gmail.com>

Date Wed 6/4/2025 9:20 PM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>; Staff, CAO (PUC) <consumer.puc@state.mn.us>

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My name is Becky Baumhoefner 27143 140th St, Fulda, MN 56131 rbaumhoefner@gmail.com

I believe this project should be examined for its legality as this is prime agricultural land that should not be taken out of production.

I believe if this project is to go forward it needs to follow stricter set back guidelines. I believe a minimum of 300 feet setback from property lines is appropriate.

I believe the battery storage area is much too close to a residential area (the town of Reading, MN) and that other projects have called for a minimum of 1/3 mile from towns for battery storage.

I believe the battery storage area will violate noise pollution laws already in place if it is situated so close to the town of Reading, MN and the residences there.

I believe if this project is allowed to go forward it should have its decommission fund fully funded at the beginning of the project.

I believe all solar panels should be hidden from view of residences and the vegetation screening should be on the projects property.

I believe the vegetative screening needs to be maintained throughout the life of the project.

I believe this project would violate rules of tile accessibility and easements. I believe surrounding properties tile lines will be affected. I believe the project needs to show funds and stated intentions for the maintenance and repair of all surrounding properties affected tile.

I believe this project does not have the transmission lines in place for the amount of solar panels that are planned. This makes me believe the project will push for more transmission lines which will further disturb the flora and fauna in the region and disrupt critical flora and fauna. I believe this project could further endanger wildlife that is already a special concern. For example Topeka Shiner, Spotted Salamander, red headed woodpecker and the Bobolink among many other species.

I believe my property values and my neighbors property values will be negatively affected due to the size and scope of this project.

I believe my quality of life will decrease because of this project. I believe this project will have a tremendous negative human and environmental impact.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Baumhoefner



PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

Summit Lake Solar Project

Docket No. IP-7155/GS-25-89/ESS-25-88

Name: Mark Rogers
Street Address: 20873 Lais Ave.
City: Reading State: MN ZIP: 56165
Email or Phone: 507-370-0175

Please share your comments on the environmental assessment (EA) that will be prepared for the Summit Lake Project:

- What potential human and environmental impacts should be studied in the EA for this project?
- What are the possible methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid these impacts?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EA?

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2025.

This project is proposed to be sited on prime farmland, not marginal farmland. While the project is supposed to add 4-6 jobs in the area, it will also cause a loss of other jobs in the area. With 1900 acres of farmland out of crop production, there will be a loss of sales and service of seed, fertilizer, chemicals, fuel, machinery, crop insurance, lending, grain handling, and trucking. With the multiplier effect on 1900 acres, this will result in several million dollars lost each year in the local economy.

Signature: Mark Rogers

Date: 6/3/25

Please submit this form at today's meeting or mail it to the address provided on the back. Please use additional sheets as necessary. Comments can also be e-mailed to the Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager, Sam Weaver, at: sam.weaver@state.mn.us.

Public Comment re: Summit Lake Solar Project

From eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us <eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us>

Date Wed 6/4/2025 8:11 PM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

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Summit Lake Solar Project

Submitter Name: David Ross

Submitter Email: davidross0670@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (507) 370-2836

Comment:

As a life long resident of the village of Reading, we enjoy our quiet little town. My concerns of the solar farm and BESS are mainly the noise levels of the BESS. Noise levels are supposed to be at approved decibels. If we have our windows open, we now have to listen to the constant buzz from the substation. The BESS will be closer yet, only adding to the constant noise. Our wind is usually out of the Northwest and with no trees on the North end of town, the noise will be as though it's right outside our windows. The two biggest windows in my home face North and West. So I am asking, as we know there is a very good chance this solar farm is going to be built, that the Summit Lake Solar Project do the right things for the good neighbors and plant trees around our parcels to dampen the noise and block the view of the solar panels. Thank you, David Ross

Submit Date: 06/05/2025 01:11 AM

Public Comment re: Summit Lake Solar Project

From eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us <eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us>

Date Thu 6/5/2025 11:13 AM

To Weaver, Sam (COMM) <Sam.Weaver@state.mn.us>

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Summit Lake Solar Project

Submitter Name: Malory Fritz

Submitter Email: maljo125@outlook.com

Submitter Telephone: (507) 227-7205

Comment:

My name is Malory Fritz, and I am writing once again to express my deep concern regarding the proposed Summit Lake Solar project. My husband and I reside within the boundaries of this project, and if it moves forward as planned, our home will be nearly surrounded?solar panels bordering our land to the west, additional panels across the county road to the east, and a new access road running directly along the north side of our property. This project poses a serious threat to the rural way of life that residents in this area have built and cherished for generations. The idea of living boxed in by fencing and industrial-scale solar panels is not only disheartening?it feels like we will no longer be able to call this place home. Some of our neighbors are even more severely impacted, with panels and fencing planned on nearly every side of their property, effectively cutting them off from the openness and connection to the land that defines this community. I respectfully urge the Commission to require greater setbacks from property lines to help mitigate this impact. While there has been some emphasis on increased setbacks from homes, the Joint Application for Site Permits (page 34) clearly states that solar arrays may be placed as close as 50 feet from property lines, and development areas as close as 10 feet to non-participating parcels. These proposed setbacks do not comply with the Nobles County Solar Energy Ordinance, which mandates a 150-foot setback. Even that distance feels insufficient given the scale of this project. I ask the Commission to consider a minimum setback of 300 feet, which would provide a more meaningful buffer and preserve some semblance of the rural landscape we know and love. Additionally, I believe any vegetative screening used to mitigate visual impacts must be installed on land controlled by the project developer?not on the property of impacted neighbors. It has been suggested that we plant our own screening, but that solution is neither fair nor practical. We should not be expected to sacrifice our usable land just to shield ourselves from an industrial project we never agreed to. We understand the importance of renewable energy, and we are not against progress. But it must be implemented with care, compassion, and respect for those who will live in its shadow every single day. I urge the Commission to consider the human impact of this project and advocate for stronger protections for the residents who stand to lose so much. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. Malory Fritz

Submit Date: 06/05/2025 04:12 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT FORM**Summit Lake Solar Project**

Docket No. IP-7155/GS-25-89/ESS-25-88

Name: Allen Madison
Street Address: 2042 Reading St
City: Reading State: MN ZIP: 56165
Email or Phone: 507-370-3476

Please share your comments on the environmental assessment (EA) that will be prepared for the Summit Lake Project:

- What potential human and environmental impacts should be studied in the EA for this project?
- What are the possible methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid these impacts?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EA?

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2025.

1. Noise — Batteries
 2. Fire — Batteries
 3. Vision — Batteries
 4. Drainage
- Property butts up to battery storage and maintenance building land.
- Lived at current location for over 30 years

Would like green screen put up to block noise and vision of battery storage area etc.

Signature: Allen Madison Date: 06/03/2025

Please submit this form at today's meeting or mail it to the address provided on the back. Please use additional sheets as necessary. Comments can also be e-mailed to the Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager, Sam Weaver, at: sam.weaver@state.mn.us.