

July 29, 2025

Viola Township
4010 Center street NE
Viola, MN 55934



Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place E. Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101
Regarding the Lemon Hill Solar Project
Docket # 25-126

Dear Chair Sieben and Members of the commission:
Below are the primary concerns we hope you will consider:

Well Water Contamination

The Lemon Hill Project poses serious risks to the well water serving our community. Viola Township lies within the fragile karst region, where the bedrock lies close to the surface and is highly susceptible to contamination.

Even a single fracture could allow pollutants to rapidly enter and spread through the aquifer. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), contaminants in this region can travel miles in just one day-threatening not only Viola and Haverhill Townships but the broader Rochester area which includes Mayo Clinic as well.

Warnings from the MN DNR

The DNR has clearly identified the environmental sensitivity of this region.

We respectfully ask you to review the numerous MN DNR documentaries online warning about the dangers of ground water in the karst region and keep in mind that bedrock in our township is less than 10 feet below the top soil in many areas.

Multiple fractures to our shallow bedrock will undoubtedly increase the likelihood of ground water contamination.

The very dangerous cadmium telluride, found in virtually all solar panels, poses long –term risks that have yet to be clearly addressed. Lack of transparency and inconsistent information regarding solar panel materials only heightens our concern.

Prime Agricultural Land

Our area includes some of the most highly productive non irrigated farmland in Minnesota, with crop productivity ratings approaching 100-% on certain properties.

Removing this land from agricultural use is not only economically short-sighted, but also environmentally unsound. This land has been carefully preserved and maintained by generations of farmers in partnership with local agencies and the DNR.

Solar and wind developers may offer competitive lease rates, but responsible land stewardship cannot be replaced by financial incentives alone.

Size and Scope of the Project

At approximately three square miles, this project would be nearly three times the size of New York's LaGuardia Airport.

Such scale on prime agricultural land –with no clear plan for mitigating contamination-represents an unacceptable risk.

To our knowledge, no guarantees or insurance mechanisms are in place to protect landowner, nearby communities, or the Mayo Clinic in the event of an environmental incident.

Impact on Livestock and Rural Stewardship

Southeastern Minnesota is home to some of the nation's most well-managed dairy and cattle farms.

These lands are cared for by residents who live and work here and who actively implement conservation practices.

A project of this magnitude would disrupt that stewardship.

We also request that a formal study be conducted on the possible effects of stray voltage from overhead power lines, which can adversely affect both livestock and humans.

Out-of- State Developer and Accountability

Ranger Power, the Illinois-based developer, seeks to construct this massive facility in Minnesota while sending energy out of state.

We question the long-term accountability of a privately held, non –Minnesota Company.

Without publicly available financial records or demonstrated long-term presence in our state, it is difficult to assess whether Ranger Power has the capacity to responsibly manage or remediate any future environmental damage.

Something as simple road damage during construction could be devastating to our limited township budget.

Hazardous Waste Risks

While Solar panels are generally safe under normal operating conditions, many contain hazardous materials such as cadmium, lead and arsenic.

If damaged-particularly by common weather events like hail storms or tornadoes-they could become a major source of contamination.

In the event of storm damage, especially over springs or waterways, cleanup could be both costly and catastrophic.

Governance and Local Control

Recent legislative changes have shifted the authority over energy projects larger than 50 megawatts to the state level, removing meaningful local input.

This makes your role as decision makers all the more vital.

We no longer have any input at the local level, so we are completely dependent that you do the due diligence regarding this project.

We urge you to consider the long-term consequences to our land, our water and our people-not just for today, but for generation to come.

Request for Feasibility Studies

Given the scale and sensitivity of this proposal, we respectfully request that the commission require the following feasibility studies before any approvals are considered:

1. Well water contamination risk in the karst region
2. Chemical analysis of the solar panels to be used
3. Evaluation of stray voltage effects on dairy, beef cattle and humans.
4. Full financial and historical review of Ranger Power's capacity to remediate environmental harm.
5. Detailed cost projection for potential clean-up of local wells, including Rochester and the Mayo Clinic.

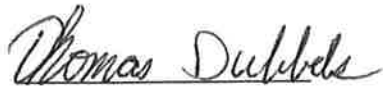
We are not opposed to renewable energy when it is implemented with care and in appropriate locations.

However we ask you to put the safety of our land, water health and communities first as you consider the Lemon Hill Solar Project.

Sincerely,



James Klavettter, Chairman



Thomas Dubbles, Board Member
eLS



Robert Jech, Board Member