

BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

8 Application for a Certificate of Public Docket No. 9804-CE-100
9 Convenience and Necessity of Grant County
10 Solar, LLC to Construct a Solar Generation
11 Facility, to be Located in Grant County,
12 Wisconsin.

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF PRESTON AND JENNIFER ADRIAN

GRANT COUNTY INTERVENORS

22 Q: Please state your name and address.

23 A: We are Preston and Jennifer Adrian, and we live at 6691 Stage Road, in Potosi Wisconsin.

24 Q: Tell us about your home, farm, and property.

25 A: Grant County Solar would border our farm on two sides for approximately three-quarters
26 of a mile.

27 Q: Please give an overview of your concerns about this project.

28 A: Specifically, we are concerned about the lack of rules and regulations in place for a
29 project of this size. There are also questions about the ability of panels, the type of which
30 has not even been determined yet, to withstand the severe weather consistently
31 experienced in this area. We have questions about the capacity of our local first
32 responders to safely handle accidents, fires, storm damage or other incidents involving
33 solar panels. We also have concerns about agriculture related aspects, including heat

1 island effect on our pollinating crops, the long-term impact on land value and agriculture
2 land rents in the area, as well as the absence of information and follow through from
3 NextEra to date. Our testimony will be supported by a variety of resources including the
4 Environmental Assessment that was conducted for this project and released in October,
5 2020. PSC REF# /

6 **Q: Why did you join Grant County Intervenors and are providing testimony in this
7 docket?**

8 A: This is a very personal matter to us, because it will inflict individual hardships on our
9 family. Reviewing the Environmental Assessment (EA) we learned that there are many
10 ways that this project will affect our family.

11 A clear economic hardship that we will suffer is in property values. Section
12 3.2.4.3 of the Environmental Assessment addresses property values, and the type of
13 property values at issue should be extended to include increased agricultural land rents as
14 a result of taking good agricultural land out of production. Section 3.2.1.1 of the
15 Environmental Assessment notes that “across the 2,058-acre project study area, 92% of
16 the land is currently in agricultural use.” Not all land being farmed is being farmed by the
17 owner of that land. NextEra/GCS was able to come in and offer three times the current
18 land rent rates on agricultural land, which many landowners would be eager to accept,
19 and then if the project goes forward, we’re forced to support it since we don’t get to
20 choose where we buy power from. This is not fair – we were here before the project, and
21 we ask that the PSC take our concerns to heart.

22 The project is not willing to guarantee that our property values will not be
23 affected, and this is an individual hardship that only those in close proximity would

1 suffer. We, and many of our neighbors, believe our property values will be affected
2 once this solar project is underway and in operation. Section 5.6 of the EA states
3 “aesthetic impacts due to the change from a typical rural landscape to a more industrial
4 appearance” would be one of the “unavoidable impacts caused by the proposed project”
5 (p. 49). In the event that we wish to sell our home or farm, it’s hard to determine how
6 much more difficult it would be to sell. For each one person that finds the new
7 landscape unpleasant, we’d have to find one that is seeking, or tolerant of, a residence
8 near a solar project of this size. This is where marketability of a property comes into
9 play, because in this situation, the burden of marketing an unaesthetically pleasing
10 landscape should not fall onto the shoulders of those who are not in agreement with the
11 project in the first place.

12 We also joined with Grant County Intervenors because of the impacts this
13 project will have on our agricultural community. While we respect people’s abilities to
14 use their land how they see fit, that is not always the case when it comes to agricultural
15 land use. If a local farmer were to want to construct a large Concentrated Animal
16 Feeding Operation (CAFO), the restrictions and guidelines as well as public dissent
17 would make it difficult for that farmer to construct such a facility; a facility they
18 deemed necessary for their livelihood - and that’s an agricultural use of land unlike that
19 of the proposed solar project. Like a CAFO, these large solar projects need to be held to
20 a higher standard - there need to be strict rules and regulations in place and they need to
21 be held accountable by an unbiased third party such as the PSC, Department of Natural
22 Resources, etc., in following those rules and regulations or be subjected to fines for not
23 following the regulations as are farmers, or if the project is not in keeping with local

1 land-use ideals, or the project cannot fit in with established land uses, the project should
2 not go forward.

3 In this case, as stated in section 5.1 and 5.2 of the Environmental Assessment, “the
4 large-scale, industrial-like, solar facilities proposed do not seem to be in keeping with the
5 exclusive agricultural designation of the project area in local land use plans” (p. 48,
6 Section 5.2 of EA). Furthermore, this is not low-yielding, unproductive farmland; this
7 project includes “areas classified as prime farmland” (p. 48, Section 5.1 of EA). The
8 project and the PSC should honor this local land use plan.

9 Another reason we joined with Grant County Intervenors is the broad concern
10 that we, as farmers, have about water and the safety of our local water resources once
11 this solar project is underway. The safety of our water supply is an issue that directly
12 affects those of us farming in the area. Controlling erosion, mitigating increased water
13 runoff, and preserving a quality water source for our animals is of great importance.
14 Section 5.5 of the EA states “the physical presence of these facilities on the landscape
15 would create environmental effects, or changes, relating to land use, aesthetics, wildlife
16 impacts, changes to vegetation, and storm water runoff and infiltration” (p. 48). If our
17 water is contaminated, its purity may or may not be able to be restored, and there is no
18 way to compensate for that type of harm. Thorough monitoring of the worksite and
19 surrounding areas by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) should be required
20 from start to finish for a project of this size to ensure the least amount of impact to the
21 environment.

22 Another type of individual hardship is related to damages we may suffer due to
23 the extreme weather conditions in this area, the reason we question the ability of the

1 project to withstand extreme weather events. The area we live in has been labeled by
2 locals as “Tornado Alley”. It is a very high wind/severe weather prone area. We found
3 debris from the tornado that occurred on March 28, 2020, scattered for 1.5 miles. In
4 another storm this spring, less than ¼ mile from the proposed project area, a neighbor
5 lost their cattle shed. There were cattle on the highway and in other neighboring fields.
6 It was 11:00 pm and yet over 100 neighbors and passers-by stopped to get cattle
7 corralled, clean up debris, and many showed up again the next morning to help with
8 further clean up. Our concerns at that moment were, “what if there had been solar
9 panels?” What damage or injury would flying panels have inflicted. In this respect, the
10 project poses the threat of an individual hardship for us and our family farm.

11 It brings to light a question of if our local first responders such as law
12 enforcement professionals, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers, and fire
13 departments are properly equipped to handle the increased caution and dangers solar
14 panels will bring to our area. When debris of shattered panels is scattered for miles in
15 six-foot tall corn, four feet of soybeans, three feet of hay, or across Conservation
16 Reserve Program (CRP) ground, how is that properly cleaned up? If panels break into
17 small pieces across the fields, how are they removed? Does responsibility fall to us, the
18 landowners adjacent to this solar project even though they themselves don’t have solar
19 panels on their land, because they just happen to be neighbors to it?

20 With all of the concerns we have regarding the safety of these solar panels and
21 the size of the project, we find it completely appalling that “Good Neighbor” and
22 “Effects Easement” documents have been offered to and signed by landowners
23 surrounding the project area. These documents are essentially waiving any legal rights
24 one would have in the event of damages or losses including health issues, birth defects,

1 underperforming cellular or telecommunications systems, property damages - any
2 negative impacts related to or stemming from the solar panels - and providing what is
3 essentially hush money to those who sign. Grant County Solar, and Commission staff in
4 the EA, have not sufficiently addressed our concerns or answered our questions. We
5 cannot put a dollar amount on our family's health and safety, and putting anyone in the
6 position to do so is not "good business."

7 **Q: Are there more technical issues that have raised questions for you?**

8 A: Yes. We have concerns about "heat island effect" which was brought up in Section 3.2.3
9 of the Environmental Assessment, reviewing the studies and the effect that large arrays of
10 solar panels can have. The EA states that "while none of the studies reviewed were
11 situated in locations similar to the proposed project, each found that solar generation
12 facilities were altering the temperature of the air and in some cases the soil nearby the
13 solar panels by a small amount" (p. 34, Section 3.2.3 of the EA). We'll be growing
14 pollinated crops along a ¾ mile border to the proposed solar panels. Altered air and soil
15 temperatures to an unknown degree could be severely damaging to these crops. Our
16 livelihood relies on high yielding crops and certain measures that we take for reaching
17 high yields have been years in the making. The EA then continues that "although the
18 Commission has approved four large solar projects in the state so far, those projects have
19 not been fully constructed and placed in operation at the time of this review, and there are
20 still uncertainties regarding some of the potential impacts that might occur as a result of
21 this project" PSC-EA-Section 5.5, p. 49.

22 Due to this lack of information, further review of the potential impacts solar
23 farms of this magnitude could have, including heat island effects on pollinating crops, is

1 imperative. This puts Wisconsin in a great position to be a front runner in this area
2 rather than a guinea pig. Badger Hollow Solar in Montfort, WI, is a similar large project.
3 A partnership with UW-Madison would be worth exploring for them to conduct their
4 own independent research once the Badger Hollow Solar project is operational and even
5 while it's still under construction. Under the advisement of UW-Madison, we could
6 have a thorough, in-depth understanding of the various impacts these solar farms have
7 on the surrounding environment. This research may unearth a need for increased
8 setbacks/greater buffers between surrounding crop ground and the solar arrays. No
9 large solar project should be permitted without a scientific based understanding of the
10 potential impacts of heat island effect.

11 **Q: Is there another technical issue that concerns you?**

12 A: Yes. As farmers, we have little knowledge of the long-term impacts of a solar
13 project, but we are curious. It surprised us to learn that the decommissioning plan
14 has not yet been submitted, and to permit a project without knowing how it will be
15 decommissioned is backwards. To our knowledge, no large-scale solar farms have
16 reached the decommissioning phase at this point. We understand the need to find
17 alternate sources of energy, but it is our job to be good stewards of the land. The lack
18 of decommissioning plans is yet another reason we need to study the large-scale
19 solar farms already underway so we can set a precedence in the state of Wisconsin.

20 **Q: Has Grant County Solar provided you with answers to your questions and
21 information regarding your concerns?**

22 A: No, they have not. For example, At the meeting in January, 2020, at the Holiday
23 Gardens Event Center in Potosi, NextEra was not prepared for the large turnout of

1 people or questions being asked. They took note of people's contact information,
2 including ours, and promised follow up as well as future meetings. However, no one
3 we know of was contacted, and additional meetings have not been scheduled.

4 Because of this lack of follow through, it's hard to take information disseminated by
5 NextEra/GCS as honorable including their claims in PSC REF#396216, that they
6 would "work with landowners to identify and address any such adverse impacts."

7 We don't see that happening, and we have brought up potential adverse impacts that
8 would, could, affect us directly and cause individual hardships for our family.

9 It also strikes us as very odd that to date, we have yet to be notified of which
10 solar panel will be used in this project, and that even in testimony filed last month,
11 Grant County Solar will not commit to use of any specific solar panel. With decreased
12 production and farther off delivery dates due to COVID-19, we find it hard to believe
13 that a solar panel has not been chosen, especially if NextEra plans to keep within the
14 projected timeline for construction and operation. Upon choosing a solar panel for the
15 project, NextEra should have to provide in-depth information regarding the panel to the
16 PSC for further review and approval – a project should not receive a permit if this basic
17 a component has not been identified. Grant County Solar should also explain in detail
18 why it cannot make a decision.

19 **Q:** **Are there steps that you believe the Commission should take before any decision is
20 made?**

21 A: Yes. It's public knowledge that Wisconsin Power & Light/Alliant Energy intends to
22 purchase the solar farm. We need to acknowledge this intent, set precedent for this type
23 of arrangement, and treat this as the public utility sponsored project that it is. We implore

1 the PSC to pause with this intrusion of large-scale solar facilities in our community. We
2 request that an Agricultural Impact Statement be conducted as we have serious questions
3 and concerns regarding the magnitude and potential environmental impacts this proposed
4 project would have.

5 **Q: Does this conclude your testimony?**

6 A: Yes. This testimony, however, may have missed some issues we are concerned about, and
7 if not raised here, that does not mean that we do not have other questions.