

November 3, 2025

Re: Case Number 25-2346-PE

Public Utilities Commission:

We are writing as town residents who live on Route 58 East. My husband and I moved to Lowell over 20 years ago to set down roots in this small town to raise our children and to enjoy the surroundings of nature. We love living in the countryside where you see all types of animals regularly. We are thankful to be surrounded by land and not houses or businesses. With the proposed plan we will be looking at solar panels on our commute down Route 58 and from my work which is the school across the road. Not only will this change the landscape for the people who reside here, this plan will also impact animal habitat and will create wildlife fragmentation. We currently have moose and deer coming through our yard. We are saddened that this could be affected as we learned the site is "adjacent to the east of the Northern project area and is mapped as whitetail deer wintering area" The current plan is to stay 100 ft away from this area. Even though we know that this will still impact the deer and possibly drive them out of this wintering yard.

The town of Lowell is quite close knit as there are only around 800 residents. I often describe living here as being in a Hallmark movie. As a small town, many land owners have small homestead types of farms and much of the land is deemed agricultural. Many residents own their own small business or commute for work. As an example of this my husband commutes to Milton, Vt. We share this because we choose to live here where there are vast expanses that are not industrial. We shared the idea of being close knit because we were very divided as a town as to how we each individually felt about the wind project when the large wind project came into our small town. Twenty years later and we as a town are just recovering from the division this former large project created. We strongly believe this solar project does not align with our town plan based on its sheer size and how it consumes an entire agricultural field for industrial/commercial use. If this project was a 1 MW solar farm that covered 4 to 7 acres we would be in support of it as we too believe in alternative energy. However, we cannot even begin to wrap our brain around 27 acres of solar panels, 15,000 panels in the field across from school. We know that the permit states there will be trees that will help block this view. There is just no way that anyone can hide from sight that many panels based on the magnitude of the project.

As a school teacher, I, Jennifer Blay, have recently taught students about birding using the Merlin App through Cornell University. The students have repeatedly seen and heard Bobolinks here at our school. I know this is because we are surrounded by grassland habitat. It was stated in this permit by Michael Lew-Smith that this location has 38.3 acres of grassland bird habitat. He surveyed 7 locations on two different days and observed multiple Bobolinks on each visit. These birds were noticed more specifically near southern hedgerow. He goes on to state on page 5 of the grassland bird survey " Bobolink, a priority species, were clearly present along the southern portion of the subject field as well as in the field off property to the south during both visits. That tells me this field is vital for their ongoing survival in this area. It was also stated at the very end there would be "proposed impacts that would result in direct and or

indirect loss of habitat. The Northland Solar Company is combating this impact by funding Bobolinks habitat somewhere else. Am I supposed to tell my students that alternative energy does not have to keep habitats intact as long as they help a habitat somewhere else? I feel like this sends the wrong message to children. How do you propose mitigating the impacts to the land and species here that will justify harnessing solar power in this area? I have worked hard to teach students to care about their environment and to understand that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. I have tried to instill in them that not all resources are renewable. That being said, the size of this project impacts lots of different animals and it may not be the nesting grounds for the Bobolinks but it will impact their access to food and shelter.

This permit needs to be denied. We would hope that the future of the Northeast Kingdom is not large-scale solar projects as farmers struggle to use agricultural land. Then struggle to sell it for anywhere near these commercial prices when it is for agricultural use. We are a high poverty community and the money initially seems beyond fair, yet it does not speak to the impact or the fact that other farmers cannot buy said land for the same value, as it would not be able to be farmed for the commercial solar prices.

We feel as I finish typing this that although we have been told we have a voice, the State of Vermont wants solar because it is green. The town of Lowell once again loses its green spaces to provide that energy. As a town with about 260 homes in 2016 we used about 3,961 MWh for the year between commercial and residential use. The wind towers produce 180,000 MWh a year on average. Our town has contributed more to the alternative energy program in Vermont on a grand scale already. The Northland Solar project does not benefit the Town of Lowell. It seems that those of us who try to have a small carbon footprint will be paying the price with habitat loss and animal loss as well while looking at solar panels we don't even need because we are a small town with very little say in the matter.

We will end with the hopes that this letter along with the others sway you to reconsider this permit, denying it based on the size and impact on our small community. "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." by Jane Goodall.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Blay
Lowell Resident
Lowell Middle School Science Teacher

Jason Blay
Lowell Resident