



## **Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association Takes a Stand on Solar Generation Facilities and Land Use Change**

We believe the best use for arable, productive agriculture land is raising the crops and livestock that feed, fuel, and clothe the world. Ohio's agricultural land is a treasure to be stewarded – and we do that best by unleashing the energy of the American farmer to meet the challenges we face today: food security, energy security, climate change, and economic sustainability. Individual property rights remain a paramount concern and priority for our members. However, the far-reaching, negative impacts that could arise with large-scale land use change for electricity generation cannot be ignored. To that end, we believe sound policy in this space should reflect the following principles:

The development of new electric generation facilities on existing, productive farmland should require the following before approval:

- A robust public comment period to allow adjacent property owners to express concerns. Those comments should be answered in writing by the approving authority for any new project (e.g. township trustees, county commissioners, Ohio Power Siting Board).
- The state should play an active role in providing financial, staff, and regulatory resources to empower local approving authorities through the full lifecycle of a project development, implementation, and de-commissioning.
- A new class of zoning should be established to reflect the change in land use from agriculture to commercial electric generation. Changes in zoning for commercial electric generation facilities should follow established standards and processes for other land use changes (e.g. residential, commercial development). Tax assessments on new property uses should go into effect once construction begins.
- A clear state policy that outlines the rights of adjacent property owners to seek compensation from a developer, operator, land owner, or the state, for damages to farming operations (e.g. damaged or destroyed tile drainage systems, surface drainage, road blockages, right-of-way infringements).



- An enforceable requirement for new project developments to undergo a thorough, site-specific, agricultural-environmental-economic review to determine the long-term impacts of replacing farmland with electric generation facilities.
- An evaluation of construction hazards and safety concerns related to the transmission of materials and labor to and from the worksite to create clear requirements for the developer that mitigate the hazards posed to local residents.
- Developers and subsequent operators should be required to engage in appropriate agreements with the landowner and local governing authorities that account for future de-commissioning and land remediation.

In addition to these project-specific principles, our organization also believes the state of Ohio should regularly convene stakeholders to conduct a full-scale, comprehensive review of state-wide land use change to maximize opportunities for growth that steward our state's unique resources. A standing land use commission that includes agricultural, industrial, and residential perspectives will inform the future of positive development in Ohio.

*Approved by the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association Board of Directors on November 30, 2023.*