

[View this email in your browser](#)

Save the Pine Barrens



PRESS RELEASE
September 9, 2021

NORTHFIELD MASS SOLAR PROJECT APPEALED

Contact: Meg Sheehan, Save the Pine Barrens
www.savethepinebarrens.org
environmentwatchesoutheasternma@gmail.com
Cell: 508-259-9154

Northfield, MA – After months of hearings and deliberations that led to special permits being issued for 10.5 Megawatts and 26,000 solar panels by the Northfield Planning Board, an [appeal](#) was filed in Franklin Superior Court in Greenfield asking the Court for preliminary and permanent injunctive relief prohibiting the landowners and developers from taking any action to begin construction of the project.

The plan would span across 124 acres of farmland located in land zoned as Residential Agricultural, all lying outside of the Town's solar overlay district. The developer is BlueWave Project Development, LLC, with offices in Boston. The landowners and developers proposed the project as "dual-use", a category of solar project in Massachusetts that maintains its use as agricultural land under the solar panels and is able to get higher ratepayer subsidies. The Massachusetts legislature had to vote to release the properties from a ten-year agricultural covenant so that the solar panels, otherwise not allowed, could be built on the farmland.

"If I had known that the farm fields across from my house would be covered with acres and acres of solar panels, I never would have bought this property," said Chris Kalinowski, one of the plaintiffs in the complaint. "Now I have to think about my property values and constant noise. And I am really worried about what happens if the lithium batteries leak or catch fire. This whole area is where my well water comes from." Also listed as concerns are light pollution and glare, noise, dust, and vibration during and post-construction, and the loss of scenic value of his property. "We have a solar overlay district. It's land that's not much use for anything. We all voted and said to put solar panels there. I never agreed to have them at my house."

A key issue for the plaintiffs is whether the concept of 'dual-use' is even a viable concept. "This project is being marketed as building a solar array but keeping the land in agriculture. That looks to me like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole," said Michael Kellett of [RESTORE: The North Woods](#), the other plaintiff. "You can see in the documents that the Clean Energy Center at UMass Amherst had many questions about this idea. There are studies that show things don't grow nearly as well in the shade of solar panels as in wide-open fields. This developer came up with the idea of part-time sheep grazing on the property as a way to claim that the land will remain in farming. In fact, there is even mention of using these same sheep to graze at other nearby properties to help other solar projects qualify as 'dual-use.' This rent-a-sheep idea is creative, I suppose, but can we really call these industrial-scale solar arrays farms?" Kellett's organization decided to join the complaint to help protect a healthy environment for members of his organization who live in Northfield. "We are a statewide organization. We are committed to land protection. We care about climate change and taking farmland out of farming under the premise that it will help fight climate change is a non-starter for us. Our members in Northfield will be adversely affected by this project, including potential damage to the Connecticut River if there is a problem with toxic run-off from the project. Members also will suffer from losses of property values and the scenic landscapes that drew them to reside in the Town. Furthermore, this sets a bad precedent that could help to facilitate other ill-conceived solar arrays elsewhere in Massachusetts."

Attorney Margaret Sheehan of Plymouth, who filed the complaint also questions the dual-use policy, not just in Northfield, but on cranberry bogs in Southeastern Massachusetts. "Unscrupulous developers are exploiting taxpayer and ratepayer subsidies for green energy. Dual-use solar is an unproven experiment. Developers are mounting solar panels in cranberry bog wetlands on telephone poles treated with copper chromated arsenic. Is this how the cranberry industry is going to grow food for 30 years? On bogs covered with telephone poles leaching arsenic? Over 1,000 telephone poles are being installed on a bog on Route 58 in Carver by a Canadian multinational corporation with our state green energy dollars. AD Makepeace is installing a mile of solar over an agricultural canal that was once a stream. Some systems are installed but there are no crops growing under them such as the REDP project on Gate Street in Carver. How well can crops grow shaded by solar panels sited to use the sun on a plot of land? Common sense says not very well. This is a waste of our money and farmland. We are in a climate crisis and it's code red. We shouldn't be wasting the public's money on ridiculous schemes like this. The state's Department of Energy Resources needs to pull the plug on this subsidy program," says Sheehan.

Climate scientist and former IPCC report author on climate mitigation, and Emeritus Professor of International Environmental Policy at Tufts University, Dr. Bill Moomaw, supports solar energy, but only in the right places. "We need solar panels to replace burning fossil fuels and wood to make electricity. Solar panels belong on rooftops and wastelands. If we are concerned about regional resiliency, are committed in Massachusetts to buying local food, and know we need forested land to sequester carbon to mitigate climate change, how much sense does it make to weaken our farming land base. Wouldn't that mean we either import more food or cut forests for farming?" Dr. Moomaw also cited a Mass Audubon report that calculated that we can get 80% of our electricity by putting solar on rooftops, parking lots, and brownfields.

Mr. Kalinowski added, "I am all for solar energy, just put it in the right places. Why is this even happening in my town? Because someone convinced someone to give money for it. That's really the story here."

Sheehan is collecting signatures on a petition asking Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker to put a temporary hold on subsidies for clear-cutting forests or using farms for large-scale solar. It can be found [here](#).



The view of the site for Array A from Christopher Kalinowski's property
September 6, 2021



Site for Solar Array A July 2021

END



Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

