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09/12/2021

To whom it may concern,

In the past few years, County Road 8 in Clear Lake/St. Cloud, MN, has become the home of many new and upcoming solar farms. This letter is being submitted by a few concerned, local families who currently farm along County Road 8. In writing this the wish is to address the guaranteed issues that accompany expanding the solar project on this road and the impact it has on local farmers.

One of the largest concerns regarding the implementation of additional solar farms in the area is the effects it will have on all of the local wildlife. Because all of the solar farms are completely fenced in, animals will not be able to freely cross back and forth as they once did. In Sherburne County, especially near the Sherco Power Plant, wild turkeys, deer, and turtles along with other wild game will suffer the consequences of these newly fenced-in enclosures. Unfortunately, the turtle population is most at risk. As it is known, County Road 8 runs along the Mississippi River supplying turtles and other wildlife with fresh drinking water. Solar farms are providing a large obstacle for these animals to travel around, increasing the risk of animal deaths via road crossing, not to mention the risk this places on drivers and their safety on the road. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources states that 44% of the MN turtle population is endangered and that it is essential to protect the upland nesting areas turtles inhabit. The Minnesota DNR states that Blanding turtles, a type of endangered MN turtle, relies on using disturbed areas such as farm fields, gardens, under power lines, and road shoulders to nest and hatch their young. One of the main ways to ensure the existence of this species is to maintain the upland areas where the turtles choose to nest, by limiting the development of land and human disturbances. Some recommended precautions include giving out flyers with an illustration of a Blanding turtles to all contractors working in the area and providing silt fencing to keep turtles out of construction areas. Though the DNR gives these few suggestions to prevent harm to turtles during construction, they claim the best way to ensure this animal does not become extinct is to avoid habitat disturbances in general.

The fields along County Road 8 also shelter animals during the summer and provide food during the winter. The barren Minnesotan winters are quit taxing on wildlife especially when it comes to finding a sustainable food source. One large reprieve that many animals, especially the Trumpeter swans and deer, utilize for food is the corn and other plant debris left over from the year's harvested fields. Without these farmed fields, animals are left with fewer places to find food near a water source throughout the tough winters.

Another factor to consider when adding solar panels to County Road 8 is the loss of prime agricultural land. Instead of producing local food to feed livestock and the growing population of people in Minnesota, food will have to be brought in from other places to make up for the farming usually done at home. When solar panels are implemented they are in service for up to twenty five years, severely affecting food supply to local Minnesotans. Not only are solar fields reducing the amount of food farmers are able to produce in a harvest season, but they are also taking away jobs from many local farmers.

Though this is not the most pressing solar farm issue at this time, it is important to take into consideration the long-term effects of solar farms are going to have on the environment. The Xcel Energy website claims that solar farms are supplying Minnesota's electricity with clean energy, which is true regarding the emissions entering our atmosphere, but this isn't accounting for all of the waste acquired when panels break or need replacement. Solar panels are made of a variety of nonrecyclable materials which will lead to great expenses when trying to dispose of the panels properly when they can no longer serve their purpose. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) came out with the first-ever projected amount of waste for solar panel clean-up in 2016. This report stated, 78 million tonnes of raw material produced by solar farm projects will be produced by the year 2050 and that it will take an excess of 15 billion dollars to safely discard these materials, showing that this process is hurting farmers and costing the company money in the long run. This "clean" use of energy clearly does not take into account the lead, cadmium, and other varieties of other toxic chemicals used to make these panels, nor how they will be able to dispose of them without damaging the farmland these solar farms are occupying when the time comes for removal. The risks of these chemicals leaking into groundwater used by countless people in the area should not be taken lightly. Several months of rainwater capturing expelled chemicals from intact panels can start the process of contaminating

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the water supply, not to mentions how the chances of toxin emission increase when panels are actually broken.

For all of the reasons mentioned above please consider minimizing the number of solar fields throughout County Road 8's farmland. This land is an invaluable part of Clear Lake's agricultural and residential community which inhabits this beautiful part of the state. There are many other options to consider before utilizing farmland and the farmers of Clear Lake urge Xcel Energy to considers alternative options to sustain this area before placing additional panels.