

Mick Lawler

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Munfordville, Kentucky 42765

February 8, 2023

Kentucky State Board on Electric Generation and Transmission Siting
P.O. Box 615
211 Sower Blvd.
Frankfort, KY 40602-0615

RECEIVED

Case #2022-00115

FEB 21 2023

Dear Commissioners:

PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION

I am grateful for the local community meeting held on January 25, 2023 at the Hart County Courthouse that allowed local citizens, including myself, the opportunity to express our concerns related to case number 2022-00115 regarding the installation of a solar farm by Leeward Renewable Energy in our area.

During my allotted time at this meeting, I followed up on my letter to you dated October 26, 2022 in which I outlined my concerns related to how this installation will impact the unique ecosystem of Green River and the endangered life within it. I have enclosed an article published by The Nature Conservancy in 2021 that identifies our river as a harbor for "*one of the most diverse assemblages of fish and freshwater mussels in the United States*" which is fed by its "*9,230 square mile watershed*".

If protection of the river's ecosystem were not enough to deny the proposed solar installation, the fact that the longest known cave system in the world is just a few miles down river should be. Green River flows through Mammoth Cave National Park which "*is home to thousands of years of human history and a rich diversity of plant and animal life, earning it the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve*".

Watershed disruption by installation of the proposed solar facility would create a chain reaction that would not only be seen locally, but also down river; potentially creating disparities that may never heal.

Other areas of our country are also expressing environmental concerns related to the installation of solar farms. For example, on

January 19, 2023, Fox News reported that for the third time in three years a Virginia community rejected a large scale solar project after objections were raised regarding "*the potential environmental impact of water runoff that could disturb agricultural production in the area*". In this case the planning commission concluded that the "*project will undoubtedly in many ways change the character of the area*". A complete copy of this article is enclosed for your review.

Fox news also reported on November 15, 2022 that four solar development companies paid settlements totaling \$1.3 million for failure "*to take steps to control runoff of water*" which resulted in construction sediment contaminating nearby waterways. A copy of this article is also enclosed.

Clearly water runoff and waterway contamination are paramount issues that plague solar farms across our nation resulting in application denials and settlement payouts.

As you make your final review of Leeward Renewable Energy's application in this case and give consideration to the voices of our community, I request that you deny the application in its entirety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mick Lawler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mick Lawler



STORIES IN KENTUCKY

Green River

Kentucky boasts a national treasure for biological diversity.

September 17, 2018 | Last updated September 08, 2021

SHARE     

The Green River is one of the most biodiverse rivers in the country. It is home to more than 150 fish species, more than 70 mussel species, and 42 endemic species (species existing nowhere else in the world). Aquatic species include nine endangered mussel species, one endangered fish, and one endangered freshwater shrimp.

Since 1999, The Nature Conservancy has worked with landowners, farmers, non-profit organizations and government agencies to improve wildlife habitat, water quality and recreational opportunities for people who live, work and play in Kentucky's Green River watershed.

Seasonal patterns orchestrate a cycle of life for the plants and animals residing in and around the Green River, cuing fish to migrate and spawn and floodplain trees to drop their seeds. Late summer and fall yield a slow and steady flow, while winter and spring bring periodic floods. Even cave-dwelling species such as blind freshwater shrimp depend on the river's natural pulse.

Support KY Nature

Protect the Green River.



Uniting the Green

Restoring the river's pulse began in the 1990s when a beautiful 125-mile stretch of the upper Green—surrounded by forest and pastureland, and boasting [one of the nation's most diverse assemblages of freshwater mussels](#)—attracted TNC's attention. Since then, we've worked with local landowners and partners on improving the ecology of this stretch of river through a variety of targeted land protection and conservation strategies.

During this time, TNC also began working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on managing Green River Lake Dam to mimic a more natural flow. The Green became the country's first river in the [Sustainable Rivers Program](#) in 2002, a collaborative effort to find more sustainable ways to manage river infrastructure in order to maximize benefits for people and nature.

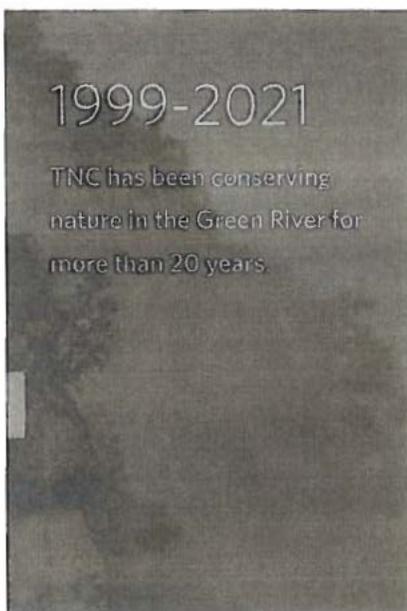
Later, TNC expanded its focus to include the lower Green with the goal of protecting a whole, naturally functioning system. This included building on the partnership with the Corps to include dams on the Nolin, Rough and Barren rivers—key tributaries to the Green. The Corps and TNC are now working together to remove old and defunct [locks and dams](#) on the Green River.

This groundbreaking work has served as a model for subsequent efforts across the country and around the world.

Finally, because of the prevalence of row crop agriculture throughout this portion of the watershed, TNC is working with farmers on land management practices that reduce nutrient pollution. Preserving healthy soils also improves crop yields and increases carbon storage.

Green River Milestones

1999-2021





Green River Fast Facts

- 9,230 square-mile watershed
- Located in Central Kentucky
- Vitaly important for wildlife habitat, drinking water, irrigation, outdoor recreation.
- Gives life to more species of plants and animals than any other Ohio River tributary.
- An unhindered 135-mile stretch—which flows from the Green River Reservoir Dam and through Mammoth Cave National Park—harbors one of the most diverse assemblages of fish and freshwater mussels in the United States.
- Threats include forest loss, erosion, water demands, and increasingly volatile cycles of flood and drought caused by a changing climate.
- Partners: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Farm Services Agency, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Division of Conservation, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Division of Water, Campbellsville University, Eastern Kentucky University, Tennessee Technical University, Western Kentucky University and The Homeplace Farm

Sustainable Rivers Project: Healthy Flows for...



MORE GREEN RIVER STORIES



FEATURE

Green River Locks And Dams



FEATURE

Green River Mussel Rescue



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sustainable Rivers Program

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VIRGINIA • Published January 19, 2023 7:19pm EST

Virginia residents reject massive solar farm plan for third time over environmental concerns

One local landowner said the project would 'destroy nearly a thousand acres of timberland'



By Thomas Catenacci | Fox News



Al Gore's climate meltdown at Davos 'ridiculous': Cheryl Casone

'Outnumbered' hosts react to former Vice President Al Gore's meltdown over climate change at Davos 2023.

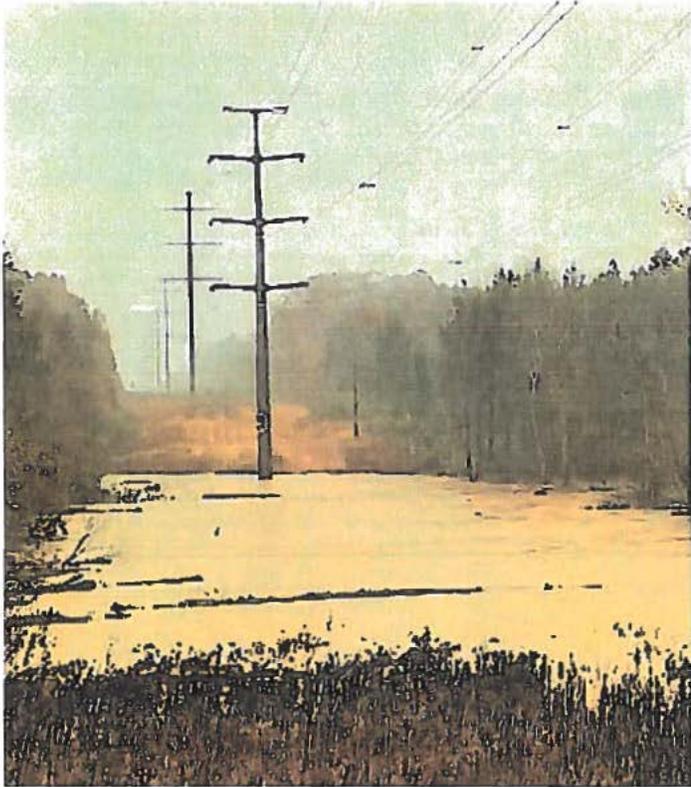
A local jurisdiction in northern Virginia moved closer to rejecting a [clean energy developer's plan](#) to construct a massive 149-megawatt solar facility on a sprawling plot of farmland for the third time in three years.

The Culpeper County, Virginia, planning commission, a nine-member panel that reviews the county's zoning and development proposals, voted unanimously during a public hearing last week to recommend the facility's proposal be denied by the board of supervisors. During the meeting, both residents and members of the commission expressed concern about the size of the project and its agricultural [and environmental impacts](#).

The Maroon Solar project was first proposed by North Carolina-based energy developer Strata Clean Energy in 2020. The company withdrew its original application following intense pushback from locals and submitted a modified proposal in 2021. After that was turned down by the county, Strata returned with its third proposal last year.

"We advocate for solar on covered parking lots along highways, on marginal brownfields or on industrial zone land," Susan Ralston, the founder of the [Virginia-based group](#) Citizens for Responsible Solar, told Fox News Digital in an interview. "But what we don't want to see is large swaths of farmland, agricultural land and timberland being taken out of [agricultural] use and used for solar."

GREEN ENERGY PROJECTS FACE STARK ENVIRONMENTAL, LOCAL OPPOSITION NATIONWIDE



Photographs show water runoff in Culpeper, Va., near the area of the proposed project, during a 2020 rainstorm. Opponents of the Maroon Solar project say runoff would become worse because of the project and potentially contaminate the water. (Citizens for Responsible Solar)

Ralston, who spoke at the hearing last week, founded Citizens for Responsible Solar in 2019 to help equip [local solar opposition efforts](#) with resources and information. The group has been active supporting grassroots movements against the development of solar facilities, including the Maroon Solar project and others in northern Virginia, on rural property.

Ralston also noted that Strata's most recent proposal involves a \$4 million siting deal.

JOHN KERRY APPLAUDS FELLOW DAVOS ATTENDEES AS 'EXTRATERRESTRIAL' FOR WANTING TO SAVE THE PLANET

"It's like a cash incentive, it's like a bribe. You know, 'If you approve our project, then we're going to give you \$4 million in cash once it gets approved,'" Ralston said. "They're going to throw as many incentives at our board to disregard the policy and disregard what residents want. There's just a lot of money at stake."

During the hearing Jan. 11, several local residents voiced concern with the project, echoing Ralston's concerns.

Among the main objections to the project was the potential environmental impact of water runoff that could disturb agricultural production in the area.



A community solar farm is pictured in Illinois Oct. 11. (Erin Hooley/Chicago Tribune/Tribune News Service via Getty Images)

"I'm from a farm family and maybe bring some sort of perspective to flooding," William Foshay, a local farmer, told the commission during the Jan. 11 hearing. "It's a wet area with highly productive soils. In an average wet year, we get corn into the ground in the middle of May. If we are dealing with an enormous amount of impervious [solar] panel coverage and vast amount of tree clearing, the subsoil is going to remain impervious — runoffs are going to be substantial.

"In just an average wet year, it means that the soils — we won't get into them until June," he added. "Furthermore, for the truly bad years, you're going to see enormous sediment runoff. You're going to see vast amounts of erosion that permanently jeopardizes productive agricultural land."

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS PLAY KEY ROLE IN BIDEN ADMIN FOREIGN POLICY, EMAILS SHOW

Josiah Wilkes, a young resident who was accompanied by his father, told the panel the project was about "the money a few people would make" from it.

"I think solar panels would be really good on top of office buildings and hospitals and even on top of people's houses," Wilkes said. "Can we keep our farmland for the cows, the crops and the woods? The farmers need to grow the food and the lumber that we all need. We don't have to be like other counties in Virginia that want money from data centers and solar fields."

Wilkes' father Joshua added that the proposal would benefit "a few select landowners who will pocket money" while having the potential to cause "disastrous environmental issues and the wasting of land."



Sarah Parmelee, a local landowner and a member of the Piedmont Environmental Council, wrote to the commission earlier this month, arguing the proposal would "destroy nearly a thousand acres of timberland."

In addition to the environmental impacts, the planning commission voted against the proposal because it violated the county's [solar development](#) policy approved in October 2019. The policy limits solar projects to 300 acres and requires certain limitations to disturbances caused by construction of such facilities.

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The project, however, would stretch across 671 acres of farmland, and construction would impact surrounding property owners, the commission concluded.

"The sheer size and scale of this project will undoubtedly in many ways change the character of the area and should be considered," staff for the planning commission wrote in a report Dec. 28. "Converting several hundred acres of productive, commercial forestland to solar panels will change the character of the immediate area.

"Staff cannot recommend support of this project at this time as proposed as it does not conform closely enough to the county's most current Utility Scale Solar policy."

[Strata Clean Energy](#) did not respond to a request for comment.

Thomas Catenacci is a politics writer for Fox News Digital.

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E elliswhyatt 

1 day ago

cutting down trees that capture carbon or covering farm land that produces food and also captures carbon to put up solar panels

how much sense does that make?

why not on roofs of large buildings or cover over parking lots

Reply •  69  • Share

F fox@2021 

1 day ago

It's about short term enrichment of select individuals and businesses.

After the project goes thru, the moneymakers will be long gone and on to the next sideshow.

Reply •  23  • Share

 3 replies

GymG 

1 day ago

That idea is viable to a point. I read somewhere that there aren't enough roof tops in the world for solar and windmills to replace fossil fuels, but used as a supplement It is viable.

Reply ▫  8  ▫ Share

 1 reply

 Show 10 more replies

w whiskeyman67418 

1 day ago

Every 3 to 4 weeks I drive by a solar farm off I-75 in Ga. It appears to be about 400 acres they clearcut of trees and vegetation for this project. On cloudy days, it's not producing power and probably 60% of the time I drive by the motors which rotate the panels to follow the sun aren't working an...

See more

Reply ▫  31  ▫ Share

 2 replies

russagrusa825 

1 day ago

A 1GW solar plant requires over 6 sq miles of space to be covered with black heat absorbing panels ... it is less than 25% efficient, provides no power at night and needs to be replaced in 20 yrs. A 1GW nuclear power plant requires just 1 sq mile and produces full power 24/7/365 for 40 yrs. If libe...

See more

Reply ▫  40  1 ▫ Share

c covidjabkill 

1 day ago

Better yet cut off all oil and oil products to liberal only. This way the rest of us sane people can live comfortably.

Reply ▫  14  ▫ Share

 1 reply

swald76 

1 day ago

Actually your numbers are off a little. It is 75 sq miles for solar since you need much more to produce that much energy. And it is about 350 sq miles

for wind to produce the same as 1 sq mile of nuclear can produce. And nuclear will produce much less toxic waste over its life span than the other ...

See more

Reply ▫ 1 ▫ Share

↪ Show 6 more replies

S SwampFox166 ⋮

1 day ago

They better read these contracts very very carefully and make sure that somewhere buried in the small print they don't find that they are responsible at the end of a certain time period for the removal of the solar panels and the disposal of the solar panels. I'm talking about the people not the co... **See more**

Reply ▫ 11 ▫ Share

↪ 1 reply

H haha018 ⋮

1 day ago

if they was serious about the climate, they'd pay us to put them on our houses and not destroying farm and forest land .

Reply ▫ 23 ▫ Share

A americanbadge ⋮

1 day ago

They actually do, but as always, there's a catch.

Reply ▫ 7 ▫ Share

↪ Show 1 more reply

L lemorted'republic ⋮

1 day ago

Remember people, this is not about what is good for the Planet, it's about power and money.

Reply ▫ 85 ▫ Share

martinjv51 ⋮

1 day ago

Exactly right we live in West Texas where they are putting up solar and wind farms by the time this equipment pays for itself it has to be replaced especially the Wind generators and they have not figured out what to do with

the fiberglass blades but to bury them an environmental nightmare. The

onl...**See more**

Reply • 22 1 • Share

↳ 2 replies

russagrusa825 ...

1 day ago

It's always about power and money

Reply • 9 • Share

↳ Show 2 more replies

A alexander111 ...

1 day ago

Why not put the solar panel farms in very harsh environments, where practically nothing grows. The Great Salt Lake desert would be a good choice because I drove through it on Interstate 80, and there was practically no vegetation. It made Northern Nevada look like a lush environment by comparision!...

See more

Reply • 12 1 • Share

flynlw ...

1 day ago

Virgina is nowhere near Utah, a closer to home solution would be to put the panels on top of large warehouses & distribution centers

Reply • 4 1 • Share

J Jojocobol ...

1 day ago

The dry sunny desert region is home to an endangered species, the desert tortoise, so there will be no solar panel farms located there. The climate wack-a-doodles would rather we give up farmland that feeds us than endanger an animal. It's their insidious way to get to negative population growth....

Reply • 1 • Share

↳ Show 2 more replies

K kicker05 ...

1 day ago

In 10-15 years those solar panels and wind mills will be not be making money so when they go down for repairs, they won't be repaired. Fusion or other technology will cause them to be obsolete.

Reply •  6  • Share

N

nopenotme854 

1 day ago

clear cutting forests and then erecting solar panels to prevent any plant growth sure sounds like environmentally sound 'green' energy to...who?

Reply •  9  • Share

 1 reply

T

tryken458 

1 day ago

Good decision for a very sensible reason.

Reply •  27  1 • Share

w

worldgonemad2020703 

1 day ago

To reduce c02 emissions let's kill a square mile of c02 eating trees . Makes sense

Reply •  4  • Share

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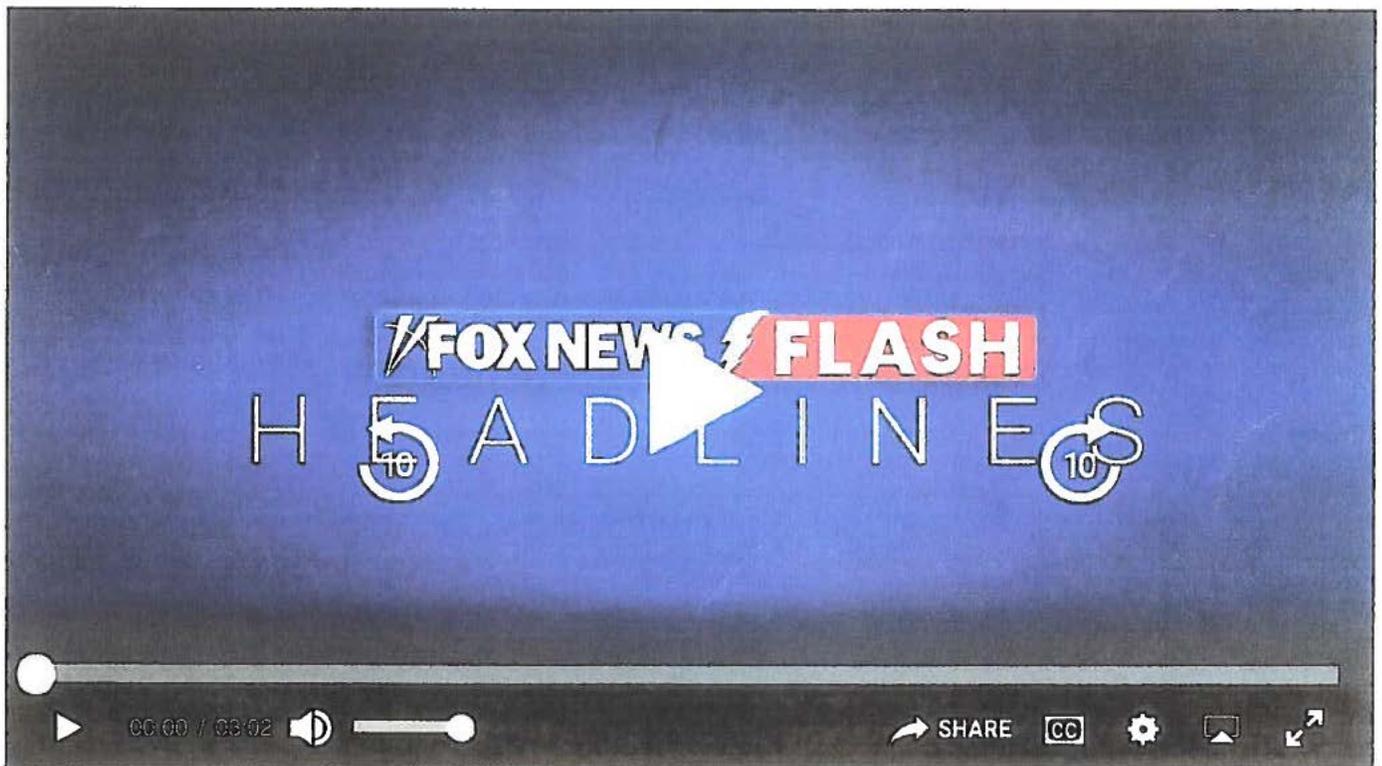
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ALABAMA Published November 15, 2022 10:13am EST

Solar farms in Alabama, Idaho, Illinois ordered to pay total of \$1.3 million for environmental violations

In AL, ID sediment from solar farm construction sites got into local waterways

Associated Press



Four companies that developed solar energy facilities in Alabama, Idaho and Illinois have agreed to pay a total of \$1.3 million for violating construction permits and rules for handling groundwater, authorities said Monday.

A statement by the [Justice Department](#) and the Environmental Protection Agency said the companies used a common construction contractor. In each case, the government alleged companies failed to take steps to control runoff water. In Alabama and Idaho, sediment from construction sites got into nearby waterways, the government said.

The cases involved AL Solar A LLC, which built a solar farm near LaFayette, Alabama; American Falls Solar LLC, which owned a site near American Falls, Idaho; Prairie State Solar LLC, owner of a development in Perry County, Illinois; and Big River Solar LLC, which had a development in White County, Illinois, according to the statement.

 Fullscript

Patients love the
easy ordering

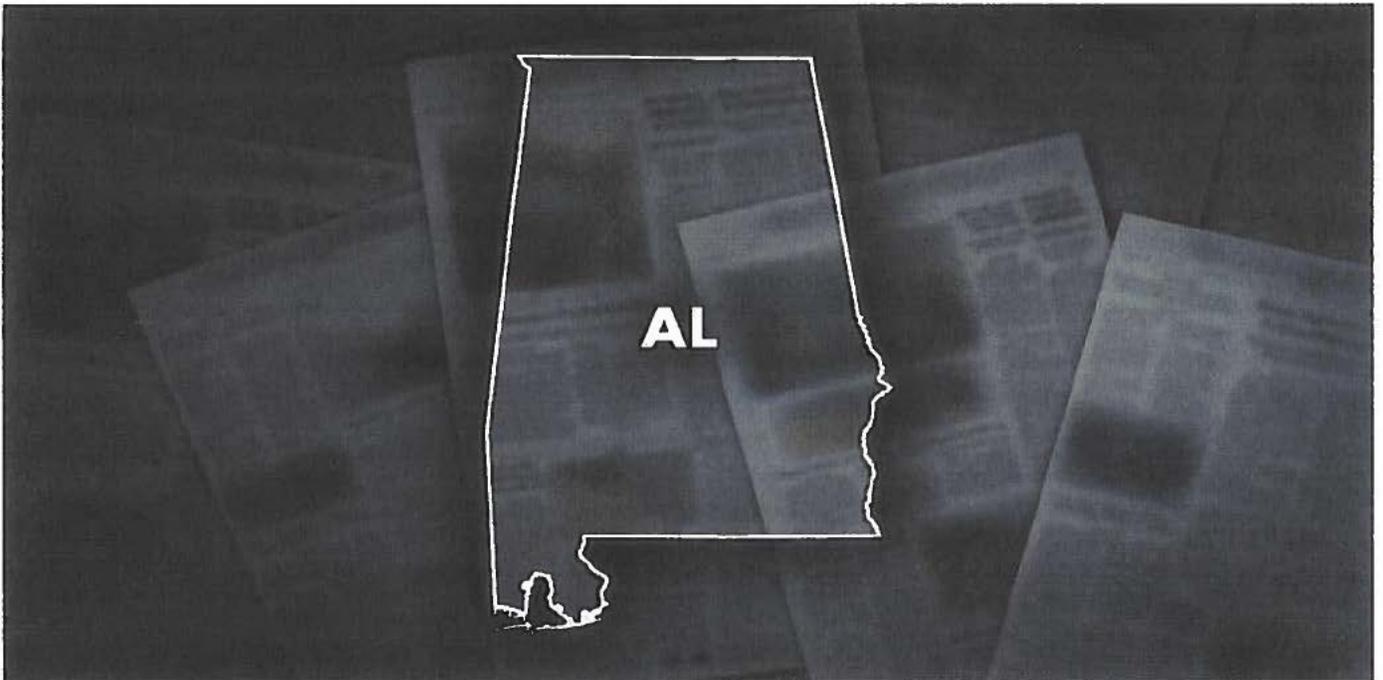
— Mary-Beth Charno, NP

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DEEP-RED RURAL OHIO'S SOLAR ENERGY BOOM DIVIDES FARMING COMMUNITIES

The solar farm owners are all subsidiaries of large international companies, the government said.



Four solar energy companies that built solar farms in Alabama, Idaho, and Illinois agreed to pay a total of \$1.3 million for polluting groundwater and violating construction permits.