

June 10, 2024

Kittitas County Community Development Services
411 R. Ruby St., Suite 2
Ellensburg, WA 98926

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Kittitas County CDS

Re: CU-24-00003 Schnebly Coulee Solar Farm

To say I was shocked as I read through all the documents for this project, might be putting it lightly. Why would Kittitas County feel there is no need for a full Environmental Impact Statement to be done for this project is beyond my understanding. This is a very large solar farm, not like others done in this county. This involves more than 1,000 acres total, with 700+- acres being used for the immediate application! It is proposed for land that is currently primarily native shrub steppe habitat, with occasional grazing occurring. Are the county planners aware that in Washington State, there is less than 20% of this habitat left, or do they simply not care about all the plant and animal species that will be negatively impacted?

The developers imply in their commentary, that many species that might have been here were not observed and so must not be here! We've all watched you, driving your pickups thru the properties involved, without any concern for protecting any of the plant life you are destroying, as well as the other heavier equipment that has been moving all over the lands west and south of Sage Hills. Many other birds and raptors than you mentioned make their homes here, I have photographic proof, as do many of the neighbors. We see herds of elk move through the properties intended for the project from fall until late spring/early summer, depending on weather and feed. Townsends ground squirrels, (listed as an "at risk" population) live on these lands, as well as Pygmy short eared lizards (horned toads) and many other mammals that we have all seen.

Fencing is not described, except to say they have been in discussion with WDFW. All the other solar farms in the county seem to have 6' chain link fencing, with additional wire on the top of some. Why in the world is it necessary to do fencing to prevent creatures being able to move through the area with the solar arrays, since I doubt they will be interested in stealing or damaging them? Why not a perimeter fence on the sides towards other ground that supports wildlife, (north, east and south) that is a 3 strand fence designed to allow young elk and deer to move through without being

injured? All the Sage Hills lands adjoining are private and the owners have no interest in allowing public access through their parcels for the public to access land adjoining.

Why is there not more discussion, or at least a public discussion about moving this project to the soon closing Kittitas County land fill location? That land is already terribly damaged for habitat and is immediately joined to Invenergys Wind Farm. The substation is closer, it would have a far smaller impact on the adjoining properties, and maybe the county and Invenergy could make it a joint effort to restore as much of it as possible to better condition. To say this project will have a negative effect on the property values of the adjacent homes is for certain. This is not a small solar farm, this is a full scale industrial sized project, with none of the benefits accruing to Kittitas County, as usual, but going to out of state or to the west side. There will be jobs during construction but few to none once it is built. Where are the benefits to Kittitas County, because I doubt we will make a lot of tax dollars to offset the value reduction that will need to be made for loss of value of homes surrounding the project.

Because I'm sure other neighbors and citizens will have mentioned problems with wildfires, I won't get in to a long discussion here, but trust me, we all have sleepless nights when the wind is howling and conditions are dry and we listen to the rumble of thunder telling us of the risk we face to live on this beautiful place. Then I could write a book about the habitat restoration plans...cheat, mustard and Russian thistle are not on the state or county weed list, and so I will be very surprised if Invenergy finds it "necessary" to control those weeds, as the KC Noxious Weed Board cannot do much to require control. But guess what is the risk with those three invading weeds? They are the carriers of fire in wildfires. Russian thistle goes airborne and has been tracked by GPS going 3-5 miles casting embers as it flies in high winds, starting fires ahead of fire lines. Cheat and mustard light off like small explosives, fun for us all, NOT!

Because I am a serious native plant student, I see plants on Sage Hills I see in few other places in the dry parts of Washington State. They make no mention of the wildflowers, although since the sheep still graze there right ahead of when the native plants reach their bloom times, perhaps most of plants have not shown for a long time. That was certainly the case in Sage Hills, but once the sheep were off of here, the amount and variety of wildflowers has grown exponentially! I will add to this that judging by what can be seen from the road, since the public is prevented from entering Invenergys wind farm, as opposed to Wild Horse Wind Farm, I doubt very much they will control weeds unless forced to and there will be minimal restoration, if any at all.

Please, for once, do a development right and require a full SEPA for this industrial project. In their commentary on the Criteria for Approval, bottom of page 1 and

continuing on page 2 and 3, they indicated that the Sage Hills development, and other adjoining single family properties on 5-20 acre parcels were not actually in compliance with county planning, since the land wasn't being used for agricultural purposes. I'm not sure where they are getting their information, but this land isn't really suitable for agricultural purposes, we've lost all the open space benefits several years ago, but none of us were expecting a huge solar farm to come in front of us and destroy our views of the shrub steppe. If any of the county commissioners would care to see why some of us long time county residents chose to live here, you are welcome to come visit me and perhaps see this end of the valley, since I doubt you come this way often.

Please, consider the pleas of those of us who will be seriously impacted by this project and consider carefully whether you represent the citizens of Kittitas County or a huge corporation from Chicago.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary L. Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Morgan" clearly distinguishable.

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