



Elevating Communities

MILL POINT SOLAR 1: ANALYSIS OF ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACTS

PREPARED MAY 2025

PREPARED FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mill Point Solar I is a 250 MW solar energy project (the “Project”) proposed by Repsol Renewables (the “Developer”) on 2,666 acres of land (the “Site”) within the Town of Glen (the “Town”) in Montgomery County (the “County”). The County commissioned MRB Group to analyze the Project’s potential to create adverse economic impacts on the Town and County, and to examine the Developer’s economic claims regarding the Project’s purported benefits. The analysis examines three key areas of concern: the loss of agricultural land and associated economic activity, the opportunity cost relating to lost alternate real estate development patterns, and negative impacts on tourism.

Adverse Impacts on Agriculture

Of the Project’s 2,666 acre footprint, approximately 2,510 acres are classified as active agricultural land. Based on data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the potential lost value of that otherwise active agricultural land is \$2.8 million per year. This lost agricultural activity would result in an annual economic loss of 21 jobs, \$786,910 in earnings, and \$3.3 million in forgone sales. Escalated at 2% per year for the life of the Project, this equates to 972 job-years, \$36.9 million in earnings, and \$155 million in sales.

Economic Impact of Lost Ag Value				
	Direct	Indirect	Total	35-Year Total
Jobs	16	5	21	725
Earnings	\$588,322	\$198,588	\$786,910	\$36,906,075
Sales	\$2,794,329	\$511,325	\$3,305,654	\$155,035,168

Source: Lightcast; MRB

The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

Economic Impact of Lost Ag Value, Cumulative				
	Direct	Indirect	Total	35-Year Total
Jobs	38	12	50	1,736
Earnings	\$1,408,566	\$475,460	\$1,884,026	\$88,360,828
Sales	\$6,690,204	\$1,224,219	\$7,914,424	\$371,186,473

Source: Lightcast; MRB

The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

The Project's impacts must also be examined with respect to other major solar developments planned in the County (the "Cumulative" impacts). The Cumulative impacts over the life of the Project could total 1,736 job-years, \$88.4 million in earnings and \$371.2 million in sales.¹

Adverse Impacts on Development

Alternative uses of the Site include new development such as residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use development, all of which could create more jobs, more tax revenue, and could support a wider array of local businesses than the Project. As such, this represents an opportunity cost of allowing the Project to proceed. By way of illustration, a development of 500 homes could generate \$380 million in property tax over the life of the Project. Furthermore, the Project will not result in any infrastructure improvements for residents that would otherwise accompany residential or commercial growth, another opportunity cost to residents.

¹ Job years represent one year of work for one individual, typically understood to be full-time employment.

Adverse Impacts on Tourism

Tourism activities in Montgomery County generated \$79 million in visitor spending in 2023, supporting local jobs and municipal tax revenues. The Project could negatively impact this economic engine by altering scenic viewsheds, diminishing the area’s rural character, and limiting opportunities for recreation, agritourism, and tourism-related business growth — all of which are key to attracting visitors and sustaining local businesses. Again, by way of illustration, a reduction of just 5% in the tourism economy would result in the loss of \$185.3 million in tourism spending and 1,626 job-years over 35 years.

Economic Value of Lost Tourism	
	Value
Total Spending on Tourism	\$79,000,000
Total Jobs Supported by Tourism	929
5% Reduction in Tourism Spending, annual	\$3,950,000
5% Reduction in Tourism Jobs	46
5% Spending Reduction, 35-year total, 2% escalation	\$185,255,000
5% Job Years Reduction, 35-year total	1,626

Source: Montgomery County; MRB
 The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

Developer Claims

On the Project’s website, the Developer has made a number of claims regarding the Project’s purported economic benefits. However, the Developer does not appear to have considered any of the following potential negative impacts:

- Loss of agricultural revenue and rural character of the community, as well as the loss of revenue to businesses that support farmland
- Diminished scenic viewsheds
- Impact to the Glen Amish community
- Lost tax revenue as a result of inability to develop Project’s acreage for other uses, such as commercial, residential, or industrial
- Diminished agriculture tourism and recreation opportunities and revenues

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	6
ADVERSE IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE	7
ADVERSE IMPACTS ON DEVELOPMENT	12
ADVERSE IMPACTS ON TOURISM	15
DEVELOPER CLAIMS	19
CONCLUSION	23

INTRODUCTION

Mill Point Solar I is a 250 MW solar energy project proposed by Repsol Renewables on 2,666 acres of land within the Town of Glen in Montgomery County. The County commissioned MRB Group to analyze the Project's potential to create adverse economic impacts on the Town and County, and to examine the Developer's economic claims regarding the Project's purported benefits. The analysis examines three key areas of concern: the loss of agricultural land and associated economic activity, the opportunity cost relating to lost alternate real estate development patterns, and negative impacts on tourism.

Data Note

To estimate the Direct and Indirect impacts, MRB Group employs the Lightcast economic modeling system.² We used data from the Developer, the County, the Town, and publicly-available and proprietary data sources as inputs to the Lightcast modeling system. Where needed, we adjusted the Lightcast model to best match the Project specifics. We then reported the results of the modeling.

² Lightcast, formerly "Economic Modeling Systems, Intl." uses data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, the US Census, and other public data sources to model out economic impacts.

ADVERSE IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Land Displacement

The Mill Point Solar I Project will occupy 2,666 acres of land in the Town of Glen. As noted by the Developer, of that total acreage, approximately 2,510 acres are considered active agricultural land.

We note that Montgomery County has 113,287 acres of farmland according to the 2022 Agricultural Census, with approximately 69.4% (78,642 acres) classified as cropland. In the Town of Glen, there are about 17,500 acres of farmland. The Project's 2,510 acres of active agricultural land therefore represent approximately:

- 2% of all farmland in Montgomery County and 3% of the county's cropland
- 14% of the Town's farmland

Economic Value Loss

Using the Agricultural Census data, we can estimate the economic impact of removing this land from agricultural production:

- Montgomery County's market value of agricultural products sold: \$126,128,000
- Estimated value per acre: \$1,113 (\$126,128,000 ÷ 113,287 acres)

Loss of Agricultural Land		
	Land (acres)	% of Total
Montgomery County	113,287	2.22%
Town of Glen, NY	17,500	14.11%

Source: 2022 Ag Census; MRB

Economic Value of Lost Farmland	
	Value
County Market Value of Ag Products	\$126,128,000
Value per Acre	\$1,113
Mill Point Solar 1 Size (Acres)	2,666
Displaced Farmland (Acres)	2,510
Potential Lost Value, annual	\$2,794,329

Source: 2022 Ag Census; MRB

- Potential annual agricultural production value lost: \$2,794,329 (2,510 acres × \$1,113 per acre). Escalated at 2% over 35 years, this is a loss of \$131 million in agricultural production value.
- The county's agricultural land generated \$241,625 in market value per farm.
- With an average farm size of 217 acres, the displaced agricultural acreage could support approximately 12 typical farms.

Economic Impact of Lost Ag Value				
	Direct	Indirect	Total	35-Year Total
Jobs	16	5	21	725
Earnings	\$588,322	\$198,588	\$786,910	\$36,906,075
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Source: Lightcast; MRB

The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

Using the Lightcast economic modeling system, this loss of agricultural production corresponds to the loss of 16 direct jobs and wages of \$588,322 per year. However, there are follow on, or "Indirect", impacts that result from these direct job losses. In other words, the removal of this productive agricultural land could negatively impact other parts of the County's agricultural sector, which is a critical component of the local economy. NASS data indicates that 79% of agricultural sales in the county come from livestock, poultry, and related products, with milk from cows accounting for \$80.5 million in sales. The loss of land for feed crops (hay/haylage, corn for silage) could indirectly affect these livestock operations. Likewise, those lost farming acres would have required inputs from other local businesses, such as suppliers and equipment dealers. And, finally, the loss of the associated wages would impact other sectors of the County's economy, with reduced household spending. All of these constitute Indirect impacts, which Lightcast estimates to be 5 jobs, almost \$200,000 per year in wages and over \$500,000 in sales. Therefore, in total, the lost agricultural activity would result in loss of 21 jobs, \$786,910 in earnings, and \$3.3 million in sales per year. Given the Project's lifespan of 35 years, and assuming an escalation rate of 2% per annum, the total economic loss from displaced farming operations is \$36.9 million in earnings, \$155 million in sales, and 725 job years.

Montgomery County and the Town of Glen have thriving Amish settlements, which sustain themselves primarily through agriculture.³ The Project would disrupt the community’s ability to thrive, given its central location in the settlement. The horse-and-buggy transportation used by Amish communities necessitates close proximity between households, and the availability of space for future generations to grow into is a key consideration when communities look to new areas for settlements. The Project will severely limit the Glen Amish settlement’s ability to grow, which may push the community—which is the backbone of the Mohawk Valley Produce Auction—to resettle elsewhere.

Impact on Agricultural Character

Beyond direct and indirect economic impacts, the conversion of farmland to a solar facility may reduce the agricultural character of the Town of Glen; fragment the agricultural landscape, making remaining farm operations less efficient; and potentially increasing pressure on other agricultural lands in the County.

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan notes that the primary land use in the Town is agricultural, and the first goal listed is to “preserve and enhance the Town’s farming operations and agricultural lands.” As such, agriculture is a key pillar of the local community, economy, and Town character. Building solar facilities on farmland may alter the traditional rural landscape that the Town is known for and residents enjoy, subsequently diminishing the visual and cultural identity of the Town as an agricultural community.

Introducing large-scale solar facilities to the landscape can also fragment contiguous blocks of farmland in the Town, leading to a potential disruption of existing agricultural operations via limited field access and increased equipment transportation time. This could reduce efficiency for

³ According to research by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, 44 of 71 Amish household heads in the Glen Amish settlement are employed in the agricultural sector.

farm operations, causing additional financial strain for the community. Fragmenting farmland will also disrupt the habitats used by wildlife, which are a source of game meat for the Glen Amish community.

Additionally, a solar facility may increase pressure on other agricultural lands in the county in two ways. The first of which is the increased pressure to produce greater quantities of agricultural products on the land remaining after working farmland is taken out of commission. The second way the solar facility can pressure other agricultural land is by signaling to landowners and operators that agricultural land may have higher value for non-farming uses. Land prices may increase as a result, making it more difficult for new or expanding farming operations to acquire land. Additionally, as farmland becomes fragmented, it may be subject to greater pressure for rezoning or subdivision, furthering the loss of agricultural land.

Cumulative Impact

The Project impacts 2,510 acres of agricultural land, but when combined with other solar projects in Montgomery County, a total of 6,311 acres are removed from agricultural use.⁴ This would represent a potential lost agricultural value of \$7 million.

Economic Value of Lost Farmland, Cumulative	
	Value
County Market Value of Ag Products	\$126,128,000
Value per Acre	\$1,113
All Solar Projects	6,311
Potential Lost Value	\$7,026,859

Source: 2022 Ag Census; MRB

⁴ Other solar projects that have been completed or are underway include the Mohawk Solar Project, Flat Creek Solar Project, and High River Energy Center.

Using the Lightcast economic modeling system, this loss of agricultural production corresponds to the loss of 50 direct and indirect jobs, \$1.9 million in annual earnings, and \$7.9 million in annual sales. Over the 35-year Project lifetime, this results in a total loss of 1,736 job-years, \$88.4 million in earnings, and \$371.2 million in sales.⁵

Economic Impact of Lost Ag Value, Cumulative				
	Direct	Indirect	Total	35-Year Total
Jobs	38	12	50	1,736
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The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

⁵ Job years represent one year of work for one individual, typically understood to be full-time employment.

ADVERSE IMPACTS ON DEVELOPMENT

Land Use Constraints

The Project will occupy 2,666 acres for at least 35 years which would cause a significant portion of the Town of Glen to be unavailable for other development opportunities during this period. This impacts other potential developers and thus imposes an opportunity cost for the community.

Economic Development Limitations

If the Project does not move forward, the Site could otherwise be utilized for residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use development. By way of illustration, a typical residential subdivision might have a density of three to four units per acre. At that density, the Project Site could potentially accommodate 8,000 to 10,000 new housing units. Even a small fraction of that number would represent a significant expansion of the Town's residential base, which would then be able to support a greater number of commercial services. In this same vein, the Project Site could support Smart Growth initiatives with mixed residential, commercial, and recreational uses.

The Site's proximity to existing transportation infrastructure would make it suitable for commercial or light industrial development, which could generate more jobs than the three to four permanent positions offered by the solar facility. The Developer indicates that it expects to create 200 jobs and stimulate local businesses. However, those construction jobs are temporary and will disappear once the Project is complete, offering no long-term employment benefits. Jobs generated by the Project's operations (such as maintenance) are minimal compared to industries like manufacturing or agriculture. Many of these jobs may also be filled by out-of-town workers, limiting economic benefits for residents of the Town.

Tax Revenue Comparison

These alternative development scenarios could produce far greater tax revenue in the long term than the Project.

- Other uses, such as residential, commercial, or mixed-use development could potentially generate larger tax revenues than the Project through property taxes, sales taxes, and other economic activities. These uses may also result in longer-term municipal revenues than the Project.
- The estimated assessed value of a newly constructed, 1,400 square foot house on less than one acre of land is \$299,900, according to the Town of Glen assessor. For the sake of illustration, if 500 new homes were to be built on the Site, they would generate \$8.1 million in property tax revenue per year. Escalated at 2% per year, this represents \$380 million in tax revenue to local jurisdictions.

Potential Property Taxes from Housing Development	
Line	Value
Estimated single-family home assessment	\$299,900
# homes the land could support	8,000-10,000
Total tax rate	54.04
Example	
# homes	500
Total assessed value	\$149,950,000
Total property taxes	\$8,104,171
Total property taxes over 35 years	\$380,085,641

Source: Town of Glen; MRB

Infrastructure Investment

The Project does not necessitate significant infrastructure improvements that might otherwise accompany residential or commercial development, such as enhanced road networks, water and sewer system expansions, or other public amenities that could benefit the broader community.

While the Project’s Host Community Benefit Agreement (HCBA) provides \$1.25 million over ten years in utility bill credits for Town residents, the amount is minimal on a per-capita basis (about \$14 per person, annually, during the 35-year timeframe), and lasts for only a fraction of the Project’s 35-year lifespan. The utility credits also do not compensate for the potentially higher electricity costs associated with infrastructure projects or transmission fees related to exporting power out of the region.

Cumulative Impacts

In addition to the Mill Point Solar 1 project, there are other existing or in-progress solar projects in Montgomery County. Together, these projects take up a total of just under 10,000 acres, which could otherwise be developed for residential, commercial, or industrial use and generate more revenue for the taxing jurisdictions.

ADVERSE IMPACTS ON TOURISM

The County relies on tourism as a key industry within its economy. In 2023, visitor spending at local businesses in the County totaled \$79 million. About \$2 million of that was spent on recreation and entertainment, \$19 million was spent on lodging, \$22 million was spent on food and beverage, \$7 million was spent on retail goods and services, \$4 million was spent on vacation homes and second properties, and \$24 million was spend on local transportation. The economic impact of this tourism spending in the Conty was \$4.4 million in county tax revenues, which reduced the tax burden on residents, and \$33 million in local employment income from jobs supported by visitor spending.⁶ A large-scale solar project would threaten these revenues, as the viewsheds and rural character of the County and Town are degraded, which would put at risk the direct and indirect economic benefits the County and Town current receive.

Visual Resources and Rural Character

The Project will significantly alter the viewsheds and rural character of the Town and County, elements that are central to both the community's identity and its potential to attract tourism-based economic activity. The introduction of large-scale solar infrastructure may undermine the aesthetic qualities that appeal to both residents and visitors seeking a scenic, pastoral environment.

Large-scale solar arrays necessitate changes to the landscape: the solar panels and associated local electrical infrastructure, access roads, security fencing, maintenance facilities, and other associated infrastructure will replace rolling farmland and greenery. The visual shift from

⁶ <https://www.nystia.org/about/tourism-advocacy/nys-economic-impact/montgomery/pdf>

farmland to an industrialized energy landscape will reduce the appeal of the Town for tourists seeking authentic rural experiences, scenic drives, and photographic opportunities.

The County has significant historical resources that draw visitors, including the Fort Plain Museum and Historical Park, Van Alstyne Homestead, Revolutionary War battlefields, and scenic byways. A large-scale solar development will create a jarring contrast with the historic landscapes in the region and diminish the authentic feel of the rural agricultural heritage, thus reducing appeal to tourists and decreasing visitation and associated economic benefits.

Recreation Opportunities

As with the impacts described in the previous section related to residential, commercial and industrial development, the Project will remove land that could otherwise be developed for nature-based activities and recreation. This could include hiking and biking trails, wildlife viewing areas, conservation corridors, agritourism, or public access parks. These amenities would enhance the Town's appeal to both tourists and residents. Additionally, employment associated with these recreation opportunities would generate more tourism revenue and jobs than a solar facility, creating enduring economic benefits.

Agricultural tourism, or agritourism, is a growing sector across the State, and especially in Montgomery County, where there are abundant fields, farms, and orchards.⁷⁸ Agritourism can provide valuable diversification for farm operations and attract outside spending. It improves economic

⁷ <https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2024/11/dinapoli-agriculture-report-reveals-economic-growth-and-challenges-facing-ny-farms#:~:text=New%20York%20farms%20grossed%20%248.5,a%2078%25%20jump%20since%202012.>

⁸ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/agsservices/agritourism.html>

resilience of these operations and the Town and County economy as a whole, and also reinforces the community's agricultural identity.⁹ Farm visits and stays, U-pick operations, and farm-to-table operations would be limited and/or precluded on this land if it were to be developed for solar use.

Tourism Economy Integration

The Project offers limited integration with the local tourism economy compared to alternative uses. An alternative use with better integration would encourage long-term economic benefits for the Town and County. Campgrounds, historic site enhancement, nature preserves, and agritourism operations create far more jobs per acre than solar facilities. These tourism-related jobs also span multiple industries, including marketing, hospitality, maintenance, retail, and more. In 2023, tourism supported the 929 jobs.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/november/agritourism-allows-farms-to-diversify-and-has-potential-benefits-for-rural-communities>

¹⁰ <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Central-New-York-New-York-Tourism-Economic-Impact-2023.pdf>

Tourism developments typically support a network of complementary businesses including lodging, restaurants, and retail. Tourism attractions subsequently support local ecosystems of small businesses, strengthening the local tax base and economic resilience of the community. In contrast, a solar facility offers minimal opportunity for such economic synergies. It is largely isolated from the surrounding economy and will draw little to no visitor traffic that could provide greater business opportunities for local shops and services.

Estimate of Potential Adverse Tourism Impacts

If the Project were to reduce tourism by just 5%, this would result in \$4 million less in total spending each year. When escalated annually at 2% over the course of 35 years, the loss in total tourism spending is \$185.3 million and 1,626 job-years.

Cumulative Impact

Together with other existing and ongoing solar projects in Montgomery County, the Project’s impacts to tourism in the County may be exacerbated.

Economic Value of Lost Tourism	
	Value
Total Spending on Tourism	\$79,000,000
Total Jobs Supported by Tourism	929
5% Reduction in Tourism Spending, annual	\$3,950,000
5% Reduction in Tourism Jobs	46
5% Spending Reduction, 35-year total, 2% escalation	\$185,255,000
5% Job Years Reduction, 35-year total	1,626

Source: Montgomery County; MRB

The 35-year total for jobs are "job years"

DEVELOPER CLAIMS

The Developer makes multiple claims on their website as to the purported economic and fiscal benefits of the Project.¹¹

1. Tax Revenue Generation

Claim: The project will generate "tens of millions of dollars" in tax revenue over its lifespan, benefiting infrastructure, schools, and public services.

Consider:

- Large-scale solar projects often negotiate PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreements, which can result in significantly lower tax contributions than traditional property tax assessments.
- The projected tax benefits are spread over decades, meaning annual contributions are far smaller.
- There is an opportunity cost the Developer appears to ignore. If the 2,666 acres were developed for something other than solar, such as commercial or industrial, the tax yield would be much higher and longer-term. As stated earlier in this report, a housing development could generate \$380 million in property tax revenues over 35 years.
- If tax incentives or abatements are provided, the net fiscal impact on the local government would be less than reported by the Developer.

¹¹ <https://www.millpointsolari.com/>

2. Job Creation and Economic Stimulation

Claim: The project will create 200 construction jobs and stimulate local businesses.

Discussion:

- Construction jobs are temporary and will disappear once the project is completed, offering no long-term employment benefits.
- Many of these jobs would be filled by workers coming from outside the Town or County, limiting economic benefits for residents.
- As noted in the section entitled Adverse Impacts on Agriculture, the Project could displace as many as 972 job-years over 35 years, easily swamping the 3 permanent jobs the Developer claims will be created.
- The long-term operational jobs (such as maintenance) are minimal compared to industries like manufacturing or agriculture.

3. Landowner Financial Benefits

Claim: The project will pay over \$2.5 million annually to local landowners, providing income stability.

Discussion:

- This benefits only participating landowners, while non-participating neighbors receive little to no financial benefit but may experience negative externalities (visual impact, property value decline).
- Solar lease agreements limit land-use flexibility for future generations and remove productive farmland from the local economy.
- Payments to landowners do not replace lost revenue for local farm supply businesses that relied on the agricultural activity of the land.

4. Host Community Benefit Program

Claim: The project will provide \$1.25 million in total over 10 years for utility bill credits to Glen residents.

Discussion:

- A total of \$125,000 per year spread across all residents results in only a small reduction in individual utility bills. There are approximately 2,500 people in Glen, which only amounts to \$14 per capita over the Project's 35-year life span.
- The utility bill credits do not compensate for potentially higher electricity costs due to infrastructure upgrades or transmission fees associated with exporting power out of the region.¹²
- These benefits are temporary (only for 10 years), while the project may operate for 30-40 years.

5. Environmental and Agricultural Enhancements

Claim: Pollinator-friendly vegetation will improve soil health, biodiversity, and water cycles, supporting local agriculture.

Discussion:

- Large-scale solar farms eliminate active farmland, which could reduce food production in the region and harm farm-related businesses.
- The actual ecological benefits depend on proper implementation, which is not always enforced or maintained over the Project's lifespan.

¹² <https://atma-energy.com/news/us-electricity-rates-are-soaring-whats-driving-the-spike#:~:text=Several%20key%20factors%20are%20contributing,than%20double%20the%20inflation%20rate.>

- Land conversion to solar may degrade soil due to grading, compaction, and long-term land use changes, making it harder to return to farming in the future.¹³

6. Community Engagement and Partnerships

Claim: The Developer is committed to building long-term partnerships with the community.

Discussion:

- Large-scale renewable energy projects are often corporate-driven and profit-motivated, meaning engagement may be superficial or focused on gaining public approval rather than meaningful collaboration.
- Community concerns (such as property values, aesthetics, and land use changes) may not be fully addressed, especially if state-level approvals override local opposition.
- Once the project is operational, corporate priorities may shift, reducing engagement and responsiveness to local issues.

¹³ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/farmers-guide-going-solar#:~:text=Heavy%20equipment%20used%20during%20installation%20can%20exacerbate,as%20well%20as%20decompacting%20soils%20after%20construction>

CONCLUSION

The Mill Point Solar I Project presents multiple potential adverse economic impacts for the Town of Glen and Montgomery County. While the PILOT payments and temporary construction jobs may provide some limited economic benefits, they must be weighed against the long-term impacts on agriculture, development potential, and tourism opportunities.

The conversion of 2,666 acres of land to solar generation for at least 35 years represents a significant land use change that will remove approximately \$131.1 million in annual agricultural production value. Additionally, it limits alternative development scenarios that could potentially create more jobs, generate higher tax revenues, and better integrate with the rural character and tourism potential of the region.

Decision-makers should carefully consider these potential negative impacts alongside the renewable energy benefits when evaluating the overall value of the project to the community.