

LINN COUNTY RENEWABLE ENERGY REVIEW COMMITTEE

February 23, 2023

Balancing Agriculture and Solar
Meeting Summary



Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- The Balancing Agriculture and Solar (BAS) committee met in the Planning & Development Department Conference Room on the 1st Floor of the Jean Oxley Public Service Center.
- In attendance:

Balancing Agriculture and Solar Committee Members	
Greg Bickal (Coggon Solar non-participating adjoining landowner)	Tom Wieseler (City of Mount Vernon - Mayor)
Gary Scott (retired electrical engineer)	Mike Tertinger (Linn County staff liaison)

- Jon Gallagher: Resource Conservationist and Director of the Linn County Soil Conservation Department, and the Linn County Affiliate to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Joined Virtually:
 - Colleen Hollinger - Natural Resources Services - Business and Industry Development
 - Rob Davis – Conexus Energy - Communications Lead
 - Mike Retterer – Pheasants Forever - National Rights-Of-Way and Energy Coordinator



Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- Action items from the BAS committee February 23 meeting:
 - Presentation from Mike Retterer from Pheasant Forever:
 - 18” to 24” minimum panel heights are typical in the south; 30-40 inches in Minnesota
 - Installation of deep-rooted perennial plants is vital for soil stability, water infiltration, and long-term soil health
 - These plants have added benefits of keeping panels cool
 - Doesn't recommend using Conservation Cover Standard; other options available
 - Seeds/sq ft is critical; 40-50 seeds sq/ft min for native deep-rooted plants should be emphasized.
 - Min 9 species in seed mix for pollinators; should be 20-30 species for real world application
 - Agrivoltaics could work however different seed mix/maintenance plan likely required; soil health impact may not be as great
 - Presentation from Colleen Hollinger & Rob Davis
 - Soil Health should be prioritized. (see Univ of Illinois project seeded in 2021 with 32” panel height min)
 - Recommended reviewing NREL website regarding the cascading benefits of a higher panel height
 - Recommended Sterns County MN Ordinance to review
 - If seed mix is done properly and established, fertilizers not necessary
- Group discussed the draft “statements” areas from the previous meeting
 - Confirm next meeting date/s March 9 and 16