

LINN COUNTY RENEWABLE ENERGY REVIEW COMMITTEE

March 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	
Steve Emerson (Architect)	Diane Brecht (Planning and Zoning Commission Member)
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)
- Brian Ross: (virtual attendee) - Vice President, Renewable Energy – Great Plains Institute

Balancing Agriculture and Solar

- Action items from the BAS committee March 23 meeting:
 - Brian Ross from Great Plains Institute was a virtual attendee to provide expert opinion on ag and solar topics and answer committee questions regarding the draft “statement” (approx. 45 min)
 - Ross highlighted 4 best practices that may have the highest impact on soil erosion, runoff and long -term soil health (In order of importance: soil compaction, soil depth, ground cover, disconnection distance between arrays)
 - Ross discussed the need for possible soil bulk density measurements before and after installation as critical
 - Committee discussion/questions for Ross centered on:
 - Minimum panel height above 32 inches and its impact on long term soil health
 - Restrictions on subsoil cuts and fills below 18 inches should be included
 - Requiring a Vegetation and Ag Mitigation Plan and associated components
 - Requiring an Agriculture Impact Mitigation and associated components
 - Requiring a Habitat and Wildlife Preservation Plan and associated components
 - Grading impact of a solar farm and possible limits to soil depth / slope restrictions
 - Requiring a limit of less than 1 mile for array area length before a wildlife corridor must be installed
 - Scorecard development to promote long term soil health and limit impact on future agriculture
 - Severe Weather/Disaster Management plan must be a required submittal
 - Agrivoltaics emphasis should be incorporated into scorecard design
 - Educational/Informational signage for pollinator/wildlife corridor protection areas should be allowed
 - Woodland Inventory and Mitigation Plan should be a required submittal
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