

Smart Public Comment

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Fri 5/29/2020 7:33 AM

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To All Concerned:

I am writing to implore you to prioritize natural resources over mega solar farms. I am encouraged by the recent changes to help protect priority habitat, however this does not go far enough. I am currently monitoring a population of Eastern Box Turtles in Middlesex County where a mega solar farm is currently under construction. Sadly, this population was not discovered in time to benefit from either review by Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program or SMART new emergency regulations. The site was however reviewed for another rare species which did benefit box turtles to some degree. Nevertheless, this population lost 40-acres of prime forest habitat, much of it was their core habitat. We will never know how many box turtles were bulldozed and killed during forest clearing, and many individuals were displaced. Still, as construction is on-going, the adults and juveniles we are radio tracking continue to be at risk. We had one instance where an adult was trapped within the construction area due to poor silt-fence maintenance, and as it is now nesting season, many individuals are moving through spaces where construction vehicles pass through daily, and therefore at risk at being run over.

Mature and healthy forests ecosystems help to alleviate climate change, and destroying them only worsens the problem. Destruction of forest habitat is a no win situation for the environment. Solar arrays, when intelligently sighted, indeed are positive and welcome.

Again, I implore you to please change policies to stop the destruction of mature forests - such destruction defeats the intended goals and spirit of solar energy.

Best Regards,

Julie Lisk
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