

House Agriculture
Support HB 2623
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Chairman Highland, Vice Chair Smith and Ranking Member Carlin thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of HB 2623, which directs the state biological survey to produce a pollinator-friendly solar site scorecard.

The Climate + Energy Project (CEP) is a thirteen-year-old, state-wide nonprofit, focused on advancing clean energy solutions to benefit the environment and the economy. We work with partners to elevate the connection between climate change and public health, provide education and outreach around clean energy technologies like wind and solar, intervene at the Kansas Corporation Commission and advance policy solutions here at the Kansas Statehouse. The Clean Energy Business Council (CEBC) is a program of the Climate + Energy Project. The Council is made up of businesses and organizations who support the transition to a clean energy economy. This diverse group represents a variety of clean energy industries including renewable energy, energy efficiency, lighting, manufacturing, electric supply, engineering and more.

The Energy Transition Lab at Minnesota State University says “Pollinators are integral to 35% of the worlds crop production”. Their research aims to identify the net impacts of co-locating pollinator friendly habitats with large scale solar farms. Current research projects are trying to examine the cost and benefit ratio of:

- Increased solar panel efficiency from reduced ambient air temperatures
- Increased biodiversity
- Better soil quality, and reduced storm water runoff
- Improved crop yield for surrounding cultivated land
- Opportunities for additional revenue such as beekeeping
- Improved public perception of solar power resulting from more aesthetically and environmentally pleasing facilities.

From *Mobilizing Finance for Conservation at the Energy-Land-Agriculture Nexus* ¹

In some states, siting solar projects is often complicated by land use tensions and trade-offs. At seven acres of land per megawatt of generating capacity, solar has a sizable land footprint — one that is only expected to grow as solar and renewables meet a larger share of U.S. energy needs.

Given the climate imperative to transition to a zero-carbon energy mix, accommodating the land use requirements of large-scale solar projects is a critical component of

¹ https://cbey.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2019-12/MobilizingFinanceforLandConservation_0.pdf

renewable energy policy development. From a land use impact perspective, solar installations are relatively benign compared to other forms of development, and importantly, they can be designed to provide net benefits to surrounding ecosystems and communities.

A growing body of research is exploring co-location opportunities on solar sites — from planting pollinator habitat to growing crops among the panels. Pollinator-friendly solar development has taken root as one such co-location opportunity for solar projects. By planting deep-rooted perennial vegetation in and around solar panels, pollinator-friendly solar projects can provide a host of ecosystem services, including habitat for wild insect pollinators, groundwater recharge, reduced erosion, soil carbon sequestration and improved crop yields from the increase in pollination services.

Kansas currently has slightly more than 30 MW of utility scale solar power. Analysts project utility Solar Photovoltaics - or PV capacity will more than double in the next five years. Kansas is poised to grow our utility PV market as more cities and businesses prioritize renewable energy.

We're pleased to support HB 2623, which will provide recognition for solar developers who go the extra mile and create pollinator friendly developments.