

Comment 20220405-ac00jl5

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The location for this proposed solar panel installation (Badger Mountain Solar Project (BMSP)) is too close to premier intact shrub-steppe habitat and one of the few areas with roamable canyons and remote desert characteristics available to recreationists (Badger Mountain, Duffy Creek, Douglas Creek). Shrub-steppe habitat across western North America has declined significantly in the last two hundred years due to development, grazing, conversion of land to other uses - shrub-steppe lands are not "wastelands"! Badger Mountain is an important regional feature on the Columbia Plateau with its upper elevations supporting the most extensive conifer forest in the western plateau region (east of the Columbia), its canyon folds on its southern slopes and coulee floors to the east (Moses Coulee, TNC Preserve) support important shrub-steppe habitat for threatened and habitat-limited sage-obligate species. The WDFW review of the proposed siting of the BMSP determined that the project proposes significant risk to the survival of the State Endangered sage-grouse and threats to established golden eagles, ferruginous hawks, as well displacement of other shrub-steppe wildlife, insects, biocrusts, and plant communities. There are few places remaining in Washington State that can support sage-grouse habitat today, this area is one of them.

Switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources is incredibly important for the survival of the human species and much life on this planet; however new energy sources need to be sited in locations that minimize conflicts with neighboring uses, especially wildlife habitat and plant communities. We need to stop displacing the ecological community components that have sustained and continue to give life!

Please act swiftly to model renewable energy sites with the "least conflict" before proceeding with BMSP.