



April 25, 2022

Dear Pocono Township Supervisors,

Please accept these comments of Our Pocono Waters for consideration by the Planning Commission, presented in person at the April 25, 2022 public meeting regarding the Swiftwater Solar Land Development Plan. In short, given the impacts of the proposed project on Swiftwater Creek, an Exceptional Value stream, we oppose the clearcutting of over 450 acres of tree removal on top of the steep slopes for this proposed solar energy project. Appropriate, smart development in the Poconos is needed to ensure that our most outstanding water resources - our Exceptional Value streams - are protected and the Swiftwater Solar project fails to do that. We should not be forced to choose between clean renewable energy and protection of outstanding waters, and therefore we urge the Planning Commission to reject the use of this site for this proposed project since the site is unsuitable for such a use.

Our Pocono Waters Campaign is made up of a group of community members and organizations dedicated to protecting the Exceptional Value streams of the Poconos. Exceptional Value is a legal designation given to the cleanest, healthiest creeks and streams; these are top tier waterways. While only 2% of Pennsylvania streams are classified as "Exceptional Value," 80% are located in the Poconos, primarily within Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties.

As local business owners, hunters, anglers, hikers, conservationists and community members, we demand that our clean streams, which support a healthy economy, remain a priority for our local community. We are proud of the mutually beneficial relationship fostered between business and the environment - a relationship that provides for good jobs and wholesome family recreation. We support smart development that doesn't strip our region of one of our most precious natural and community resources: Exceptional Value (EV) streams.

Our opposition to the use of this property for the proposed Swiftwater Solar project is centered on the following:

First, the proposed project is located squarely in a Pocono Township “Recreation District,” per the town zoning map. As stated in the township’s Zoning Code, the regulations of Recreation Districts are intended to “maximize open space while allowing for recreational activities that generate generate employment, retail trade, retail services, tourism, and related dining/lodging and entertainment uses.” Township of Pocono Zoning Code § 470-19(A). Although we recognize that Swiftwater Solar has obtained an “essential services” designation, the fact of the matter is that large-scale solar energy generation facilities clearly do not fall into the kind of use intended to be allowed within the Recreation Districts of the Township. As discussed above, Our Pocono Waters believes in smart development that allows our economy and our natural resources to work in tandem. The Township’s zoning map is part of this, and this proposed use simply does not fall under either the letter or the intent of the Zoning Code. There are other, more appropriate zones within the Township. There could be other sites.

Second, the project presents both known and yet unstudied risks to Swiftwater Creek, an EV protected stream. The project calls for over 450 acres of forest removal on the top of Bear Mountain. The impact of the removal of this scale of critical upland vegetation on steep slopes would be detrimental to the health of Swiftwater Creek, an EV stream.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recognizes that large scale solar panel installations require special consideration, and has provided specific guidance for that purpose. (This guidance, along with other information, can be found on the DEP webpage at: <http://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/Energy/Renewables/Pages/Solar.aspx>.) A critical part of that is recognizing that although solar panels are not exactly impervious surface, they do create increased stormwater runoff situations, particularly where there are steep slopes involved. The Swiftwater Solar project calls for the construction of 15 stormwater basins. Each basin appears to be designed to exceed their designed capacity simultaneously; and if a stormwater basin overflows, there is potential that the accumulated, concentrated pollutants within that basin can also be washed out and into nearby waterways. It is easy to see that there could be dramatically increased stormwater runoff, particularly during the rain events where there is tremendous amount of rainfall, like those that we have seen even just early in the spring of 2022. The basins to Swiftwater Creek discharge immediately above steep

slopes and are on average 250 feet above the creek. The majority of the site surface is shown to be directed to Swiftwater Creek, and the impacts of these discharges would surely cause negative impacts on the EV creek. The project's NPDES permits have not been obtained, and we urge the Planning Commission to delay action until that part of the process has been completed.

Our Pocono Waters has always made it clear that we support a healthy economy and the mutually beneficial relationship fostered between business and the environment. We are for strong clean streams protections. We are for smart growth. And this, unfortunately, is not that. We urge the Planning Commission to not take any action to approve this plan unless and until the community impact analysis is finalized and reviewed by the Planning Commission, in accordance with Section 390.29(K) of the Township Zoning Ordinance.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Donna Kohut, Our Pocono Waters Campaign Manager, at [kohut@pennfuture.org](mailto:kohut@pennfuture.org).

Respectfully submitted,

*Emma H. Bast*

Emma Bast, Esq.  
Donna Kohut

Our Pocono Waters

Cc: Pocono Township Manager  
Pocono Township Board of Commissioners