

**BEFORE
THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD**

In the Matter of the Application)	
of Eastern Cottontail Solar LLC for a)	Case No. 24-0495-EL-BGN
Certificate of Environmental Compatibility)	
and Public Need)	

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ALLEN TURNBULL

Q-1. Please state your name, home address, and occupation.

A-1. My name is Allen Turnbull, and I live at 4495 Canal Road NE, Pleasantville in Walnut Township. I am 82 years old and am retired. I have a bachelor's degree from OSU in Agriculture Economics and Finance and a master's from American University in Public Financial Management. I worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from 1967 to 1998, where I focused on making loans to farmers, home buyers and builders, communities, and businesses in rural areas in Ohio, including Fairfield County. After retiring from the USDA, I worked for a national bank from 1998 through 2006 making business loans throughout Ohio.

Q-2. Please describe your connection to the Eastern Cottontail Solar Project.

A-2. My wife and I have leased 110 acres of our 121-acre farm in Walnut Township for the Eastern Cottontail Solar Project. I have lived on this property since 1971, and I hope to continue living on this property. My wife lived on this property with me until November 2024, when it became necessary for her to live in an Alzheimer's facility.

Q-3. Can you describe your family's connections to the area?

A-3. I was born and raised on my family's farm in Franklin County and farmed it several years when my father died at the age of 50. My wife and I purchased our farm in Walnut Township 54 years ago in 1971, where we raised our three children while I was working for the USDA. We have been raising corn, soybeans, and wheat, and, for several years in the past, had a feeder pig operation. I served for 5 years on the Walnut Township Zoning Commission, including serving as the Chairman of the Commission for my last year. We

1 have been active Farm Bureau members since 1971 and established two Farm Bureau
2 Councils, made up of several neighbors who have an interest in and/or connection to
3 agriculture.

4
5 **Q-4. Can you describe your decision to participate in the project?**

6 **A-4.** In 2017, I noticed that my wife was experiencing memory problems. As her memory
7 continued to decline, I feared the worst and began searching for ways to raise additional
8 income to supplement our retirement income. I considered raising feeder pigs again but
9 was concerned that my many new neighbors, who had built their houses on an adjacent
10 farm, would not appreciate the odor. I next considered putting up boat storage buildings
11 on our property because of the demand for storage due to the nearness to Buckeye Lake,
12 but decided against it because it would entail a significant upfront investment.

13
14 Then in 2018 we were approached about leasing out most of our farm for solar. I began
15 researching utility-scale solar by talking to many different people, including farmers,
16 agriculturalists, the Farm Bureau, and attorneys who had experience with such projects
17 in Ohio and North Carolina.

18
19 In my past experience as a loan officer with significant size construction projects, I have
20 found that the quality of any major new construction project is highly dependent on the
21 conscientiousness and reputation of the developer and the construction firm. I did my
22 due diligence on Geenex Solar, the original developer, and later EDF. We also visited
23 several utility-scale solar projects in different stages of development by different

1 developers in Ohio. I wanted to understand the potential adverse impacts to my property
2 and also to my neighbors' property.

3
4 We concluded that entering into a lease for the Eastern Cottontail project would meet our
5 goal of providing additional income for retirement, while providing additional tax
6 income for our community and contributing to a project that would generate additional
7 electricity equivalent to 42,000 households. It was on February 8, 2019 that we entered
8 into the lease.

9
10 **Q-5. Have you continued to do any research since signing a lease?**

11 **A-5.** Yes, after signing the lease, I continued to speak with one farmer in a similar situation
12 to me who had leased out his farm for a solar project to ask about his experience. These
13 conversations were very reassuring to me.

14
15 On May 22, 2024, I also visited Fox Squirrel Solar in Madison County, which was
16 developed by EDF, the same developer for Eastern Cottontail. The project had just
17 started operating phase one of its three phases, and I was impressed with what I saw. I
18 visited the project again a few months later to see how the vegetation and screening
19 looked. I was quite satisfied with the established growth of the vegetation and trees
20 planted for screening, which help to protect the viewshed in the areas where panels are
21 most visible to the public.

22
23 I have learned that, over the last few years, as more projects have been approved by the
24 Ohio Power Siting Board and gone through construction, the Board's staff has seen the

1 need for additional conditions being placed on these projects in order to address issues
2 that were occurring on some projects. I believe the 64 conditions proposed in the Staff
3 Report of Investigation of Eastern Cottontail should go a long way in addressing the
4 opponents' concerns.

5
6 **Q-6. Did you ever speak with your neighbors about the project?**

7 **A-6.** Yes. I have spoken with at least 10 of my neighbors, including those who adjoin my
8 property and others who are not directly adjacent but live within one half mile of the
9 project, about why we signed a lease for solar. I have spoken with some of them more
10 than once. Meeting with them gave me a chance to talk about the baseless conjectures,
11 hyperbole and purported statements they have received and/or heard from the opposition
12 to the project. In talking to those who opposed the project, I sensed that most had not
13 made an effort to attend the public information meetings nor visit the local EDF office.

14
15 **Q-7. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

16 **A-7.** I am testifying in support of the Eastern Cottontail Solar Project.

17
18 **Q-8. Why do you support the project?**

19 **A-8.** The project will help give me the additional income that I need to help pay for my
20 wife's care at an Alzheimer's facility. The project will also provide tax revenue and jobs
21 that will benefit Fairfield County each year for the life of the project.

22
23 A denial would mean that I would have to raise additional income to care for my wife

1 through other means, and if that was not possible, I probably would have to sell off the
2 farm where I have lived for more than 50 years. It would also mean that the schools, the
3 fire and the police departments, Walnut Township, and others would not be receiving
4 tax income of almost \$2 million per year for the life of the project. In addition, there
5 would be a loss of clean, renewable electricity generated equivalent to 42,000
6 households in an area of significant demand. Also, the over 500 construction and long-
7 term operations and maintenance jobs would not be created.

8
9 Also, a denial would mean that several sheep farmers, who are interested in grazing the
10 solar fields, would not be able to expand their businesses due to the relatively high prices
11 of land.

12
13 One last point. A February 2, 2025 article in the Dominion Post on PJM, the Regional
14 Power Grid Operator for 13 states, including Ohio, predicted significant growth in
15 electricity demand over the next 20 years. PJM warned that a capacity shortage could
16 affect its system as early as the 2026-2027 delivery year. It pointed out that new
17 electricity facilities are not being built fast enough. Let's pray that the demand does not
18 result in brownouts or at worse blackouts. I am hopeful that this project will help to solve
19 this problem.

20
21 **Q-9. Does this conclude your testimony?**

22 **A-9.** Yes, but I reserve the right to update this testimony to respond to any further testimony in
23 this case.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that The Ohio Power Siting Board's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on the parties referenced on the service list of the docket card who have electronically subscribed to the case on this 21st day of February, 2025.

/s/ Trent Dougherty

Trent Dougherty