

My name is Jay Newcomb and I live in Randolph, Virginia. I own over 100 acres of land that will be used to create Randolph Solar, a utility-scale solar farm that will generate enough clean electricity to power over 80,000 homes. Recently, some voices opposed to the Randolph Solar project have been active on social media, making false claims about solar panel safety among other things. You can read one science-based response to the accusations [here](#).

I'm speaking as a landowner, resident, and community member. Why am I interested in my land being part of this solar project? There are several reasons. The acres I will be leasing for the project are timber farms whose trees are about five years old. If you know about pine and other hardwood plantations, you know that it costs thousands of dollars and just as many man hours to clear the land, burn piles, and plant trees. After that, it's a 15-20 year wait for any financial yield. In the meantime, you have to spray for weeds and competing hardwood species, either by hand or helicopter. Timber farming is labor-intensive, and profits are never guaranteed. A neighboring landowner estimates that his timber farms earn him between [\\$30 and \\$50 per acre](#). And that can change with fluctuating market prices.

I had the opportunity to visit an actual solar farm in Powhatan County. I was amazed that you couldn't see a single panel from the main road. When I stood at a building in the middle of farm, I couldn't see anything beyond the several acres of buffer land. On that visit, I learned about the many strict environmental regulations that solar projects must meet. And I heard for myself how quiet a solar farm is, even from right inside it. It made me confident that the 3 acres of buffer planned around my home would be more than enough for our privacy and views. My wife and baby daughter will be home throughout the construction and operation of Randolph Solar, and we're not worried about being disturbed.

Many of my neighbors are also timber farmers, and many others farm soybeans, tobacco, and corn. We all know the kind of labor farming takes and how quickly market prices can change and impact your income. Leasing my land means financial security in these uncertain times as well as eliminating my labor so I can focus on family and my primary job. The terms of the lease also account for inflation every year. And at the end of the project's life, the land will still be mine.

My grandfather and my aunt are leasing 450 combined acres of their land too. The solar farm won't use all of it. Some will be left for buffers or to protect wetlands and wildlife. Not only will we still get paid for leasing that land, we can continue timber farming on those acres if we want. I'm an avid deer hunter and am committed to land stewardship. I am confident that enough land will remain untouched so as not to harm wildlife populations.

People can read about the [economic benefits](#) our county will receive from the Randolph Solar project. It's money for the schools my daughter will attend one day and new jobs coming into our area. People will probably also read many claims about solar that aren't true. Unfortunately, there's no way of keeping some from spreading misinformation. I can tell you that as a father, I would never agree to surround my home with anything I thought would harm my family. I'm a part of the solar project to *benefit* my family. I hope people stick to looking at facts and science and listening to the voices of us who are directly involved when they form their opinions.

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