

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

Petition of Rutland Renewable Energy, LLC,
for a certificate of public good, pursuant to 30
V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the construction of
the "Cold River Project" consisting of a
photovoltaic electric generating facility of up
to 2.3 MW located at the intersection of Cold
River Road and Stratton Road in Rutland,
Vermont

Docket No: 8188

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PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF THOMAS HUBBARD
ON BEHALF OF TOWN OF RUTLAND

June 18, 2014

Mr. Hubbard's testimony addressees the proposed project's impacts upon primary agricultural soils and the ability of the site to support agriculture pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §248(b)(5) (use of natural resources and 10 V.S.A. §6086(9)(B).

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1 Q1. Please state your name, occupation, and address.

2 A1. My name is Thomas Hubbard. I reside at 238 Stratton Road in the Town of Rutland. I
3 have been a farmer all of my adult life. I currently raise bison and also operate a trash
4 hauling business.

5

6 Q2. Are you familiar with the proposed solar project site and the surrounding properties?

7 A2. Yes. I am familiar with the proposed solar project site on Cold River Road. For three
8 generations, my family has owned and operated a farm on approximately 300 acres of
9 land that borders the east side of Cold River Road. My grandfather ran a dairy farm,
10 which my father, and then later, my brother and I continued. We raised hay and corn on
11 the proposed solar site for many years for use in connection with our farming operation.

12

13 Q3. What is the purpose of your testimony?

14 A3. To explain the value of this property as an agricultural resource and to address the impact
15 of this solar project upon the open space available for farming in this area of Rutland
16 Town.

17

18 Q4. Can you describe the value of the proposed solar site as agricultural land?

19 A4. Yes. For 35 to 40 years, my family farmed the field where RRE wants to erect solar
20 panels and equipment. We tilled this field and raised corn and hay. The soils in this field
21 are very good for agriculture. When we farmed it, this was always a high-yield field. My
22 grandfather and father called it a 90% field meaning that it produced a high yield with

1 little waste or poor quality crop. This field is excellent agricultural land; it is as good a
2 field as any field of which I am aware.

3
4 Q5. Would the development of the proposed solar project have an adverse impact upon the
5 use of the field as an agricultural resource?

6 A5. Yes. The solar panels and associated equipment will make the field unavailable for
7 farming. As a result of development, there are fewer and fewer fields available for
8 farming. Herds must be bigger now days. Many farmers do not own enough land to
9 support their farming operations and must rent additional fields from others or, where
10 they can, purchase fields that are located away from the main farm property. With
11 increased development and traffic, it has become harder and harder to transport farm
12 equipment safely to and from fields that are located away from the main farm.

13 Though we have not farmed this field in recent years, we would welcome the
14 opportunity to do so again. This field is close to the Hubbard Farm and is easily
15 accessible to us. This field would produce three cuts of hay each growing season and
16 would yield approximately 300 round bales (7 tractor trailer loads) which we would use
17 to feed our livestock (bison and Angus). We cannot grow all of the feed stock that our
18 livestock require. As a result, we must buy hay on the open market at considerable
19 expense. It is cheaper to grow hay than to buy it. Fields such as this are a limited
20 agricultural resource that dwindles all the time. The removal of fields like this one from
21 agricultural production places greater economic pressure on farmers, whose numbers
22 continue to decline as well.

1 Q6. Does the proposed solar project comply with the Town of Rutland's standards for siting
2 solar facilities?

3 A6. No. The Town's siting standards require solar facilities of greater than 100kW to be
4 located on "non-agricultural land or along field edges to avoid fragmentation of, and to
5 minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to agricultural lands and open fields." This site
6 also has primary agricultural soils located on it. The Town's solar siting standards state
7 that "ground-mounted solar energy facilities shall not be located on primary agricultural
8 soils as mapped by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in order to
9 preserve such lands for agricultural use." Town of Rutland Solar Facility Siting
10 Standards, Agricultural Land/Open Space.

11

12 Q7. Does this conclude your testimony?

13 A7. Yes.