



in support of CUP - case #244-5200 Rancho Viejo Solar

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To Public Comments AES/BESS Permit Hearing <publiccomment@santafecountynm.gov>

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To: publiccomment@santafecountynm.gov

Subject: In Support of CUP - Case #24-5200 Rancho Viejo Solar

Date: June 28, 2025

Dear Esteemed Santa Fe County Officials,

Greetings from a proud resident of our sun-soaked, sagebrush-dotted paradise! I'm writing to throw my wholehearted support behind the Rancho Viejo Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project, case #24-5200. This initiative is a shining beacon (pun absolutely intended) of clean, reliable, and sustainable energy that could power our community for the next 30 years. With 680 acres of prime, low-fire-risk land and a private landowner ready to lease, this project is like finding a green chile cheeseburger on the menu of life—too good to pass up!

Now, I know we've got a few folks in our midst—let's call them the Tinfoil Hat Brigade, or as they prefer, the "CleanEnergyCoalition" (oh, the irony!)—who are throwing a full-on NIMBY tantrum about this project. Picture them, if you will, huddled in their artisanal adobe bunkers, clutching their organic quinoa and whispering tales of solar panels run amok, as if they're auditioning for a low-budget sci-fi flick. These folks are so dedicated to their Not-In-My-Backyard philosophy that they'd rather see our county powered by fairy dust and the gentle breezes of unicorn flatulence than embrace a practical solution like solar energy.

Let's break this down with some cold, hard facts, because I know you fine folks at the County appreciate data over drama. The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) database is crystal clear:

- **ZERO** BESS fires have ever spread outside a facility to burn neighboring structures.
- **ZERO** deaths have been caused by BESS systems.
- **ZERO** instances of toxic contamination of air, land, or water have been recorded by federal, state, or county authorities.
- **ZERO** CO₂, methane, sulfur, mercury, or radioactivity is produced during operation.

- And, get this, the water usage is so low it's practically a rounding error—just enough to keep four households hydrated while powering **37,000 homes**.

Compare that to the alternative: rolling brownouts during summer peak loads or “planned outages” when PNM shuts down power lines through the Santa Fe National Forest during high winds. I don't know about you, but I'd rather not spend my summer evenings reading by candlelight like I'm auditioning for a Jane Austen novel.

The Rancho Viejo Solar Farm is a golden opportunity—literally, because we've got more sunshine than a beach resort in July. This project is on a low-fuel, low-fire-risk site on the edge of town, perfectly positioned to deliver clean, fixed-cost energy without so much as a whiff of environmental harm. Yet, the NIMBYs are out here waving their “CleanEnergyCoalition” flag (which I'm pretty sure is just a recycled yoga mat) and filing baseless appeals to delay this project. Their latest stunt? Another appeal of the Planning Commission's approval, which is about as useful as a screen door on a submarine. All it's doing is driving up costs for everyone and delaying the day we can all bask in the glow of affordable, sustainable power.

I mean, let's talk about this “Coalition” for a second. They're out here spreading misinformation faster than you can say “gluten-free turquoise smoothie.” They claim solar and BESS are a “danger to the public,” but I'm pretty sure the only danger is to their aesthetic sensibilities. Heaven forbid a solar panel interrupts their view of the sunset or clashes with their carefully curated collection of dreamcatchers. These folks are so busy polishing their tinfoil hats and chanting about imaginary toxic clouds that they've forgotten what actual progress looks like. Spoiler alert: it's not a world where we rely on mythical creatures to keep the lights on.

I humbly ask that you, our wise and forward-thinking County officials, see through the NIMBY smokescreen and keep this project on track. The Rancho Viejo Solar Farm is a chance to harness our abundant sunshine, reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and ensure reliable power without breaking the bank or the planet. Let's not let a handful of folks who think electricity should come from pixie magic and good vibes derail a project that benefits all 37,000 households it could serve.

Please, let's send a message to the “CleanEnergyCoalition” that their appeal, due by August 12, 2025, is as welcome as a skunk at a picnic. I respectfully urge you to uphold the Planning Commission's approval and move forward with this transformative project. Together, we can make Santa Fe County a leader in clean energy, leaving the tinfoil hats and unicorn dreams in the dust where they belong.

With gratitude and a hearty dose of sunny optimism,
John Lonergan
Proud Santa Fe County Resident

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