1   MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2   PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING

3   FOR NON-TIDAL WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS

4   PERMIT APPLICATION

5   SUBMITTED BY MD SOLAR 1 LLC.

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7   *   *   *   *   *

8

9   May 13, 2019

10   6:00 p.m.

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14   Charles County Government Building

15   200 Baltimore Street

16   La Plata, Maryland

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1   P R O C E E D I N G S

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3   MS. SIGILLITO: Good evening. My name is

4   Amanda Sigillito and I am the Chief of the

5   Non-Tidal Wetlands Division at the Maryland

6   Department of the Environment. I want to

7   welcome you and thank you for taking the time

8   to participate in the State's regulatory

9   process and for caring about environmental

10 protection.

11   Today's public informational hearing is

12 further opportunity for the public to provide

13 oral testimony on the MD Solar 1 LLC Shugart

14 Valley Place project. Due to the high volume

15 of requests to provide oral testimony at the

16 February 27, 2019 public informational hearing

17 on this project, the Department is continuing

18 the hearing tonight and providing an

19 opportunity for public input.

20   I'm the presiding official for tonight's

21 public informational hearing. Also attending

22 the hearing from the Department is John Backus,

23 who is the Program Manager for the

24 Environmental Standards and Assessment Program,

25 William Seiger who is Chief of the Department's

1   Waterway Construction Division. And out front

2   at the sign-in table, Jeff Thompson, Central

3   Region Chief of the Non-Tidal Wetlands Division

4   and Angel Valdez, Natural Resource Planner of

5   the Environmental Standards and Assessment

6   Program.

7   At this time I would like to ask Secretary

8   Ben Grumbles from the Department of the

9   Environment to come forward.

10   MR. GRUMBLES: All I wanted to do was to

11   welcome everybody here this evening for this

12   important continuation of gathering

13   information, hearing testimony for this

14   project. We recognize that this is extremely

15   important to you, to the community and the

16   county, to the watershed and to the state and

17   so I encourage you to provide your perspectives

18   and insights. Our staff will review every

19   single item that's submitted to us and we look

20   forward to another productive, civil and

21   informative evening on this project. Thank you

22   for being here.

23   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. We are

24   conducting this public hearing pursuant to

25   Subsection 5-204 of the Environment Article and

1 Code of Maryland Regulations 26170413 and

2 26230202.

3   The purpose of tonight's public

4 informational hearing is for the Department to

5 hear from interested persons about this

6 project. The Department's role is to listen to

7 testimony and statements and obtain any initial

8 information from those in attendance tonight.

9 The Department recognizes strong feelings exist

10 regarding this project. Everyone who has asked

11 to speak tonight has a right to be heard and I

12 am asking we do our best to respect this right.

13   Tonight's hearing is being recorded. The

14 hearing transcript will be used to facilitate

15 the final permit decision. If there is anyone

16 who has not signed the attendance sheets out

17 front, please do so before you leave tonight.

18 These sheets will be used to notify you of our

19 final decision and provide you with a copy of

20 the hearing report. Additionally, these sheets

21 are being used by me to identify those of you

22 who wish to make a statement.

23   Tonight's hearing is for the Non-Tidal

24 Wetlands and Waterways permit application

25 number 18-NT-0323/201861760, submitted by MD

1   Solar 1 LLC. The application requests

2   authorization to conduct regulated activities

3   associated with the construction of a 32.5

4   megawatt fixed tilt solar panel array to

5   provide energy to Georgetown University. The

6   project location is 4850 Shugart Valley Place,

7   La Plata, Charles County.

8   The project will include site clearing and

9   grubbing of approximately 249 acres, the

10   installation of modular solar panels, access

11   and maintenance roads, an electrical substation

12   overhead connection lines, security fence and

13   screening landscaping. The project will

14   permanently impact 50,670 square feet of the 25

15   foot Non-Tidal Wetland buffer, 40 linear feet

16   of stream and convert 4,550 square feet of

17   forested Non-Tidal Wetlands to emergent

18   Non-Tidal Wetlands. The project will also

19   temporarily impact 22 linear feet of stream.

20   The project area is within the Ward's Run

21   Watershed, which includes two Tier II or

22   high-quality stream segments. The project's

23   Tier II impacts are as follows: Watershed

24   forest cover will be reduced by 210 acres

25   adjacent to the Tier II streams and the

1   existing riparian stream buffers on Tier II and

2   other on-site streams will be reduced.

3   Construction of the proposed project requires a

4   Non-Tidal Wetlands and waterways permit from

5   the Department.

6   I will now ask the MD Solar 1 LLC

7   representatives to come forward and make a

8   brief presentation. And if you could start by

9   giving us your name, please.

10   MR. THOMAS: Good evening. My name is

11   Jason Thomas, T-H-O-M-A-S, I'm the director of

12   development for Origis Energy. The purpose of

13   my testimony tonight is to provide an overview

14   of the proposed MD Solar 1 project. I've been

15   asked to keep my remarks brief.

16   Origis Energy is the solar development

17   operation company proposing the project. MD

18   Solar 1 is the applicant seeking the waterway

19   crossing and wetlands permit from the Maryland

20   Department of the Environment.

21   This slide shows a view of the project.

22   The MD Solar 1 project is a 32 and a half

23   megawatt alternating current photovoltaic solar

24   facility. The project is approximately 249

25   acres within two parcels totaling 588 acres.

1   The project address is 4850 Shugart Valley

2   Place.

3   The permit application is associated with

4   impacts in three specific areas. A temporary

5   bridge on Shugart Valley Place that crosses

6   Ward's Run, this location. A temporary bridge

7   at one culvert on an emergency access road

8   located here. And timbering two different

9   locations on the generation tie line that

10   facilitate the interconnection to the SMECO

11   power line in the southeast corner. That

12   concludes the overview. Mr. Dane Bauer is here

13   with H&B solutions to present the details of

14   the permit application.

15   MR. BAUER: I'm Dane Bower. I'm an owner

16   with my partner, Melissa Hall, in H&B

17   Solutions, D-A-N-E, B-A-U-E-R, 12814 Heathland

18   Drive, Bishopville, Maryland. Our business is

19   focused on utility scale solar projects. We

20   team up with the developers to do the technical

21   analysis. We prepare the environmental review

22   document. We oversee the preparation of the

23   constraints mapping. We do that in cooperation

24   with a team of experts. In this case we had

25   ECS and they did the geotechnical, the wetlands

1   and the Forest Conservation Act assessments.

2   We took all that information together and

3   we put it into a comprehensive environmental

4   review document. It's interesting to note that

5   the limit of disturbance on the project now is

6   about 210 acres and of that 210 acres we only

7   had 6,000 square feet of impacts.

8   As Jason pointed out, they are only in

9   three areas. There's an existing culvert which

10   is at the bottom left and there's only 240

11   square feet of disturbance associated with

12   that. The bridge is a temporary bridge.

13   There's an existing culvert there with the

14   concrete over top to it that is used by an

15   entrance from the few property owners that live

16   in the area now. It's not sufficient for the

17   trucks that will be transporting construction

18   equipment and materials in, so we're building a

19   temporary bridge just downstream of the

20   existing culvert. The impacts are about 1,320

21   square feet. They're temporary in nature. As

22   compared to the culvert, which is permanent.

23   Then you look over to the right where the

24   transmission interconnection is to take place

25   and there's a 75 foot corridor, a little over a

1   thousand feet long, and underneath that

2   corridor there are some small spots of

3   Wetlands. There's going to be temporary

4   impacts in those areas also. We're timbering

5   but leaving the root structures in, so there

6   will be no disturbance to the ground. The

7   timber will be taken out. It's about 4,550

8   square feet.

9   Another interesting note is when we were

10 doing the environmental constraints, the client

11 agreed that it would be to the best interests

12 of the project if we didn't use 25 foot

13 setbacks for the buffers but we used 35 feet.

14 So the entire project in every area where we

15 were required to do buffering whether it was

16 Wetlands or RPZs, they were added distances to

17 be more conservative. And that's the basic

18 overview of the environmental requests that

19 we've made for the Wetlands permit.

20   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. We will now

21 continue with the public testimony on the

22 project. First I will ask any elected

23 officials or their representatives who may be

24 present if they would like to make a statement,

25 if you are making an oral statement. Please

1   identify yourself, spell your name to help out

2   the transcriber and indicate any organization

3   that you may be representing. It doesn't

4   appear that there are any elected officials

5   represented here tonight but I'll ask now.

6   All right. Then first up we have Will

7   Hiley, Karen Rohan and Kate McGowan. And if

8   you would come down here to the microphone and

9   give us your statement and if please limit your

10   statements to three minutes. Thank you.

11   QUESTIONER: Good evening. My name is

12   Will Hiley, H-I-L-E-Y, and I'd like to thank

13   the Department of the Environment for

14   continuing this hearing so that everyone could

15   speak.

16   I live in Georgetown across from

17   Georgetown campus, but I also have a farm that

18   lies partially inside Charles County. Every

19   day I walk through Georgetown campus and I find

20   that they don't have any solar on campus but

21   they have plenty of room to and what this

22   amounts, in my mind, is a privileged

23   institution giving a "not in my backyard" so

24   they're putting it down here in an

25   underdeveloped or not fully developed part of

1   the state. I think it's unimaginative of the

2   university and very environmentally

3   insensitive.

4   On the part of I guess it was Origis

5   Energy, if they really were concerned with the

6   environment in Charles County, I think there

7   are plenty of already disturbed areas, there's

8   strip malls up and down the highway. I think

9   there's also a unused airstrip in Charles

10   County that this could be put on. And one

11   thing that has not -- they've stressed the lack

12   of affect that this is going to have on the

13   environment, but I have not heard them talk

14   about how they were going to control weeds and

15   grasses.

16   I know a lot of these solar farms use

17   herbicides and things like Roundup which will

18   go directly into the Potomac watershed, which

19   is already in a pretty bad shape. Then it goes

20   down into the Chesapeake and down into the

21   Atlantic. Anyway, so I'd just like to give my

22   opposition to this project and I hope that both

23   Georgetown University will try something on

24   their campus and set an example before they

25   come into our backyard and that maybe Origis

1   Energy use some of the empty land, already

2   disturbed land, in Charles County if they

3   really would like to do something in this

4   county. Thank you very much.

5   MS. SIGILLITO: Karen Rohan and then Kate

6   McGowan.

7   QUESTIONER: Hello, my name is Karen Rohan

8   from 517 Lincoln Street, Rockville, Maryland.

9   Thank you for holding this hearing and for

10   listening to the opinions of the public on this

11   matter.

12   I request that the permit be denied for

13   the reasons following: While I am not local to

14   Nanjemoy, I have lived in Maryland for all my

15   life and have been right in the center of the

16   constant development of the D.C. suburbs into

17   highly urbanized areas. I've seen the

18   extensive loss of natural land and the

19   degradation of air and water quality in my

20   region and have concerns for the relatively

21   untouched areas that are affected by this

22   proposal.

23   Many highly qualified speakers have

24   addressed their concerns with the changes to

25   water quality after the construction of the

1   solar farm and as well as the impacts of those

2   on the Nanjemoy populous. I would like to echo

3   and support these arguments as well as adding

4   my own.

5   As of 2016 the state of Maryland has

6   released a list of Maryland's species in need

7   of conservation. I provide the links in the

8   paper and have provided a summary of the

9   numerical data. 742 Maryland plants species

10   have declined to the point where they are

11   consider rare or of concern 624 of which are

12   considered threatened to endangered, 343 of

13   which are in critical condition and 58 of which

14   are not legally recognized or protected.

15   In addition to these numbers over 300

16   species have also gone extinct. These numbers

17   are likely higher now. These extinctions are

18   heavily driven by clearing for agriculture and

19   the urban development that is part of my

20   everyday reality. Southern Maryland especially

21   has seen swift and extensive urban development

22   in the past few years, sprawling into areas

23   that have previously been untouched.

24   In addition to plants, over 514 animal

25   species, many of them birds, have also declined

1   to the extent that they are now considered rare

2   or of concern. 436 are considered threatened

3   to endangered, 198 of which are in critical

4   condition and 280 of which are not legally

5   recognized or protected.

6   While I was not able to find an estimate

7   of Maryland animals that have gone extinct, the

8   most prominent examples are bison, wolves and

9   elk. Again, these numbers are likely higher

10   now.

11   The numbers show that Maryland's species

12   are severely under threat and the situation

13   only continues to deteriorate. The state of

14   Maryland is quoted as saying much of our

15   natural heritage is now confined to small

16   fragments of the original wilderness. These

17   remaining fragments are in dire need of

18   protections and the proposed location is one

19   such fragment.

20   In addition to providing for native

21   species established forests are known to

22   provide buffers and protections against many

23   invasive species kudzu and mile-a-minute are

24   two invasive vine species that can grow up to a

25   foot a day and primarily infest cleared, sunny

1   an open areas as well as disturbed forest.

2   Mechanical methods of destruction are expensive

3   and ineffective and it's much more likely that

4   the area while would be managed and maintained

5   through herbicide use. I request that the

6   Department recall arguments made on behalf of

7   the water supply and the residents and the

8   affects that herbicide and insecticide use

9   would have on what is one of our few remaining

10 clean water sources.

11   In addition to environmental concerns, I

12 have humanitarian concerns. This is a lot of

13 trouble and possible damage done to the land

14 and people down river of the site to what

15 amounts to little to no benefit for the actual

16 people of the region. The entire solar farm is

17 for the benefit of people many miles away. I

18 fail to see how this project will provide any

19 lasting benefit to this county or the residents

20 of.

21   In addition, this land is of great

22 cultural significance to the Piscataway people.

23 This country has an extensive history of doing

24 wrong to the many Native American peoples

25 extending into the modern day. I ask that

1   effort to be made not to inflict more harm onto

2   people who have been harmed too much already.

3   I request that the permit be denied and

4   that Georgetown University reconsider its

5   location in order to set a good example for

6   other parties interested in solar energy. I

7   also hope that the state will work together

8   with the landowners, environment groups and the

9   Piscataway people in order to protected this

10   piece of Maryland's culture and natural

11   heritage. Thank you.

12   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

13   QUESTIONER: Thank you for your patience.

14   MS. SIGILLITO: Kate McGowan.

15   QUESTIONER: Hello. So I'm asking you to

16   deny this permit application and foremost I

17   would like to request that you also consider

18   when considering this permit application that

19   you consider the additional project on Josie

20   Bailey Place which will increase the cleared

21   area of this project. It's the power

22   substation that's associated with this. It's

23   technically a separate project but we know that

24   a solar farm won't work without a power

25   substation. That's on Josie Bailey Place and

1   it well increase the cleared area by another 50

2   acres. So I'd ask that you consider that as

3   well.

4   I also would like to make a comment.

5   Earlier it was mentioned that there are small

6   spots of Wetlands on the property, but even a

7   very small Wetland could contain a lot of

8   biodiversity.

9   So I have an issue with the permit

10   application. On the permit application section

11   7 it says public need. It marked economic,

12   health and welfare and other, it says

13   supplemental energy generation into the grid.

14   So in terms of economic impact, they are taking

15   the trees from this area, they are lumbering

16   them. Origis is -- their parent company is

17   based not the United States but in Cypress, so

18   there's no immediate economic benefit coming to

19   Maryland at all because Georgetown is

20   benefiting from this.

21   In terms of health and welfare, I fail to

22   see how solar panels -- razing forests to build

23   the solar panels are helping our health and

24   welfare at all.

25   And in terms of supplemental energy

1   generation to the grid, all of this electricity

2   has been promised to Georgetown. It's not

3   going to local customers. So there's no public

4   need.

5   I'd also like -- I have a question about

6   alternative sites. It says on this application

7   that they have considered two to four sites but

8   you've heard multiple comments about all the

9   other suitable sites in the area. I find it

10   very suspicious, very concerning, indeed.

11   Southern Maryland has no shortage of former

12   tobacco farms that are empty fields. There are

13   former gravel pits. There are former

14   airstrips. There are all potentially

15   available. That information about whether or

16   not others were looked into has not been made

17   available to the public and I find that

18   concerning.

19   I also would like to say that we have not

20   seen the promised results of Georgetown's

21   environmental impact assessment. They promised

22   us we would see it by this hearing and we have

23   not seen it and I find that absolutely

24   egregious that they can continue to lie to us

25   and continue to lie to the state.

1   I couldn't enroll in health insurance if I

2   had one dollar difference in estimate from my

3   income but they're allowed to completely make

4   up dates. And to the state -- thank you.

5   MS. SIGILLITO: Gabriel Daous and then

6   Dave Turbish and Even Thorne. Sir, are you

7   Mr. Daous?

8   QUESTIONER: My first name is Jerry,

9   J-E-R-R-Y, F-E-I-T-H. I'm against destroying

10 250 acres for solar panels for Georgetown

11 Hospital. I'm against solar panels and solar

12 roofs. It is a scam. They sell you solar

13 roofs for $30,000, have you pay $300 a month

14 for 20 years to save $50 on your electricity

15 bill. Renewable energy's goal, including

16 windmills, is to increase your electric bill so

17 you can't afford electricity. Clean fossil

18 fuel and nuclear energy, especially since our

19 President Donald John Trump has enabled America

20 to be self-sufficient in energy is the best for

21 the average person's electric bill. His tax

22 cut legislation has enabled our electric bills

23 to decrease.

24   Those wealthy Washington, D.C.

25 organizations don't care about our quality of

1 life, like Al Gore living in a residence that

2 uses an insurmountable amount of energy while

3 he wants not to be able to afford

4 air-conditioning and heat. Send them back to

5 Washington, D.C. and leave Charles County

6 alone.

7   The green's dream of a zero emissions

8 world without coal, oil or natural gas, they

9 need to think about what they're wishing for.

10   First, there would be no mass production

11 of steel without coke from coking coal to

12 remove oxygen from iron ore. Coal saved the

13 forests from this fate. We could produce gold

14 and silver without using mineral hydrocarbons

15 and with ingenuity we could probably produce

16 unrefined copper, lead and tin and alloys like

17 brass and bronze. But making large quantities

18 of nuclear fuels, cement, aluminum, refined

19 metals, plastics nylons synthetics

20 petrochemicals and poly pipes would be

21 impossible.

22   Making wind turbines and solar panels

23 would also be impossible without fossil fuels.

24 Solar panels and batteries need high purity

25 ingredients. Every machine on Earth needs

1   hydrocarbons. Modern life cannot be supported

2   by a pre-coal oil economy without reliable

3   electricity and diesel powered farm machinery

4   and transport trucks. Cities are unsustainable

5   in greentopia. 90 percent of us people will

6   need to go. Thank you.

7   MS. SIGILLITO: Would you like to leave

8   your comments with us. Thank you. Dave

9   Turbish, Evan Thorne, Deborah Boyd.

10   QUESTIONER: My name is Dave Turbish. My

11   family's been farming our place in Charles

12   County for over 150 years. We support the

13   solar project because we support renewable

14   energy. Also the solar panels will keep tract

15   housing from being built there which would be

16   bad for the environmental and bad for everybody

17   down here. We support the solar project

18   because it's a way for the family farmers like

19   us to raise money to care for the old folks

20   without selling out to the housing developers.

21   Lastly, even if the solar project does not

22   go through, the owners of this place may simply

23   log it anyway, which is their right, whether

24   any of us like it or not, but with the solar

25   panels we get something good in return,

1   renewable energy. Thank you, we support the

2   project.

3   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

4   QUESTIONER: Hello, my name's Evan Thorne

5   and I own three parcels of property in

6   Nanjemoy, one is a farm, one is all forested in

7   which I do intend on timber in the future, and

8   one where my home site is and I'm in favor of

9   the project. I think that it is better than a

10   neighborhood being on the this farm, it being

11   subdivided and renewable resource, renewable

12   energy that's low impact is the thing of the

13   future and I approve of it, thank you.

14   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Deborah Boyd,

15   James Bascer.

16   QUESTIONER: My name is Deborah Boyd. I

17   was born and raised in Nanjemoy, Maryland. I

18   currently own several large parcels of land

19   that are wooded and farmland. I currently work

20   for the state of Maryland as a licensed

21   environmental health specialist. I believe the

22   benefit of producing clean renewable power

23   outweighs the temporary impact of cutting these

24   trees needed for this project. I understand

25   that there will be green space under and around

1   the solar panels. This floor space will

2   prevent any rainwater runoff from the site.

3   According to the newspaper reports on half

4   of the parcel containing the solar farm, about

5   250 acres, will stay preserved as woodland.

6   This is better than clear-cutting the whole

7   parcel for a housing development. Remember

8   that the state of Maryland just passed a bill

9   stating 50 percent of the energy must come from

10   renewable by 2030. If individuals are against

11   these solar projects, the state will never make

12   the 50 percent by 2030. Thank you for

13   considering my support for this project.

14   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. James Bascer

15   B-A-S-C-E-R from Hebron, Maryland. D'nisse

16   Guitara and Ann Stark.

17   QUESTIONER: Good evening. My name is

18   D'nisse Guitara. For 122 years Audubon

19   Nationalist Society has helped residents in the

20   D.C. region enjoy, learn and protect nature.

21   We believe in the urgency of fighting

22   climate change, including by building renewable

23   energy everywhere it is appropriate but we also

24   have a biodiversity crisis. Solar energy

25   should not come at the expense of one of our

1   most valuable forest habitats. Instead, it

2   should be built closer to towns, on every

3   rooftop, parking garage, old industrial site

4   and landfill, to name a few much better

5   options.

6   There are four main reasons why MDE should

7   not grant Origis the Wetlands permit. The

8   proposed project will permanently destroy the

9   habitat of six at risk bird species and one

10   federally endangered mussel species, the dwarf

11   wedge muscle. The proposed project will

12   permanently degrade the water quality of two

13   Tier II streams, the highest water quality

14   standard in Maryland.

15   The property will need to be clear of

16   trees and graded to remove slopes which will

17   regenerate both cheap flow and sediment runoff

18   that will erode and fill the two streams and

19   then flow into the Chesapeake Bay.

20   The proposed project site is part of the

21   ancestral homeland of the Piscataway Tribe,

22   none of the developers have consulted the

23   members of the Piscataway Tribe about the

24   project and the destruction of their sacred

25   land. Furthermore, this site could be of

 1   archaeological significant for the Piscataway

 2   tribe as well.

 3   Georgetown University contracted the

 4   services of Eastern Research Group to conduct a

 5   third-party assessment of the environmental

 6   impact of the project. Originally the report

 7   was going to be released mid April 2019,

 8   allowing the public to see an independent

 9   assessment of the environmental resources at

10   risk of loss. Today, the second hearing was

11   scheduled to allow the public to review this

12   report before testifying again. As of today

13   the report has not been released, making it

14   premature to move forward and permitting.

15   I just want to mention that there are six

16   at risk bird species and two of them are

17   actually listed under the IUCN red list of

18   endangered species list under threaten. Those

19   are the Wood Thrush and the Eastern

20   Whip-poor-will.

21   Due to climate change, the Wood Thrush

22   population has decreased already by 59 percent

23   and the Warblers by 34 percent. Due to the

24   environmental social impacts of the proposed

25   project would have on wildlife and its people

1   ANS believes MDE should not approve the

2   Wetlands permit to MD Solar 1, Origis Energy,

3   thank you.

4   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

5   QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Ann Stark.

6   I'm a resident of Charles County and I live in

7   Waldorf. I think it's time to take a stand

8   against forest fragmentation and loss of

9   habitat in Charles County. With the largest

10 forest in Southern Maryland proposed to be

11 clear-cut, I strongly oppose this project.

12   An alternative and appropriate location

13 would have been in the barren land of 2,783

14 acres that is noted in the Charles County

15 comprehensive plan. Why was this not even a

16 consideration by Georgetown or the solar

17 developer Origis.

18   The Department of Natural Resources

19 conservation benefits assessment has this

20 particular site parcel rated the following,

21 five stars being the best rating. Habitat

22 connectivity five stars. The states remaining

23 large blocks of forest and wetlands and habitat

24 pathways that connect them. Rare species and

25 wildlife habitat five stars. It's described by

1   the Biodiversity Conservation Network. These

2   are habitats of the state's rarest plants and

3   animals as well as high-quality in rare natural

4   communities and other living resources of

5   conservation concern.

6   Support of aquatic life watersheds that

7   support high-quality streams is four star.

8   They are important for the biodiversity and

9   fresh water recreational fisheries. Forests

10   important for quality protection of the

11   watershed are the most effective in preventing

12   pollution to streams, rivers and bays

13   maintaining healthy stream hydrology. This is

14   a four star.

15   Proximity to protected lands is five

16   stars. I'm going to skip that part because I

17   need to move on. But you get my point. This

18   is just outrageous that we're even considering

19   this land to be clear-cut. Point by point, why

20   is this controversial. The project would

21   produce 32.5 megawatts from 100,000 solar

22   panels, which Georgetown University wants to

23   use to build their sustainable energy credit in

24   keeping with the American Campuses Act on

25   climate pledge. The clear-cut would degrade

1   two Tier II streams, the best in Maryland, and

2   would require crossing one of those streams.

3   I heard earlier Origis saying we're going

4   to build a temporary bridge and we never talk

5   about all the impacts. I've seen too many

6   developments say there is going to be no noise

7   pollution, there's going to be no impact to

8   environment. I don't believe it. A quick

9   Google search can tell you people who live near

10   solar panels of this magnitude are very

11   unhappy.

12   Bottom line, I just want you to visualize

13   a hot summer day outside. A typical day in the

14   DMV with a temperature of 90 degrees and 80

15   percent humidity. Can you imagine convincing

16   yourself to sit underneath one of those 100,000

17   solar panels instead of a forest with canopy

18   trees. I can't either. I think the choice is

19   obvious. This is a bad decision for the

20   county, for the state and for human health.

21   Thank you very much.

22   MS. SIGILLITO: Neil Gorley, Aliza Cara,

23   Elizabeth Castleman.

24   QUESTIONER: Hello, my name's Aliza Cava,

25   C-A-V-A. I'm the director of conservation at

1   the Audubon Naturalist Society in the greater

2   D.C. region. I wanted to talk about our twin

3   crises about biodiversity and climate and the

4   news this week that over one million species

5   are at risk of extinction.

6   We do have to meet renewable energy goals.

7   We have really significant energy goals we need

8   to meat, but if we do so at the expense of our

9   forests which contribute -- deforestation

10   contributes 10 percent of global greenhouse gas

11   emissions, then we're really killing Peter to

12   pay Paul here. It's not a choice we should be

13   making in order to meet these goals around

14   renewable energy.

15   As D'nisse already pointed out, there are

16   rooftops, there are landfills, there are old

17   farm sites that are closer in to town that are

18   all much better options for clearing such a

19   large facility or simply putting it on top of

20   more distributed locations.

21   And I wanted to mention the 50 percent by

22   2030. Audubon Naturalist Society is a big

23   supporter of the clean energy legislation.

24   It's my understanding that this project will be

25   selling its energy to Georgetown under the

1   direct power purchase agreement for the next 20

2   years, which means Maryland will not be able to

3   claim credit for solar certificates until that

4   20 year period is up. So this particular

5   project will not help Maryland achieve its 50

6   percent by 2030 goals. Over time it will

7   revert to putting energy on the Maryland grid

8   directly but not by 2030. That's less than 20

9   years from now.

10   Those are the main comments I wanted to

11   make. But really the importance of this

12   project, this forest, this is the lungs of D.C.

13   This forest is so valuable to the state, so

14   much of it is already under conservation with

15   both federal and state dollars, that punching a

16   hole in it and fragmenting it would really put

17   these existing conservation investments further

18   into the Nanjemoy forest at risk. And I think

19   the state should really keep that in mind as it

20   considers whether or not the permit this

21   project in the holistic sense. Thank you.

22   QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Elizabeth Castleman.

23   I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland but I'm

24   pretty familiar with this area having grown up

25   riding horses and being on farms all throughout

1 this area in my childhood.

2   So I would like to start by saying that

3 I'm completely opposed to the project and I

4 just want to echo some of the earlier

5 statements about how there's plenty of space

6 both on Georgetown and on the campus and as

7 well as different areas like lots and airstrips

8 that could be hosts to this project.

9   So just solar farms may provide a good

10 alternative to fossil fuels and provide a

11 passive source of energy leading to lower costs

12 down the road but the rush to create these

13 massive structures will result in the loss of

14 green space all over the world which is

15 absolutely not a valid tradeoff considering the

16 fact that so many institutions are doing this

17 in the name of environmentalism.

18   And I'm sure that you're very aware of the

19 many hasty decisions that have been made in

20 this country as well as the state in the name

21 of profit that have led to ecological

22 destruction and devastation that we are now

23 trying to fix and undo.

24   So I want to -- I don't want to allow this

25 to be another problem like that. This is the

1   largest forest land in Southern Maryland. Two

2   important streams will be degraded as people

3   talked about before and these would have a

4   large and negative impact throughout the

5   landscape. The streams are of some of the

6   highest quality in the state and the

7   destruction of them will have negative impacts

8   that won't just affect the native flora and

9   fauna but it will of course affect us as well.

10   This ecosystem is crucial and its protection

11   needs to be the number one priority.

12   Renewable energy is vital for a healthy

13   future for both society and environment though

14   deforestation is absolutely not going to create

15   a positive impact for any member of society,

16   human, plant or animal. Renewable energy by

17   way of destroying ancestorial woodlands is not

18   at all truly sustainable or ecologically viable.

19   The devastating impacts of habitat

20   destruction both forest and stream greatly

21   outweigh the positive impacts that powering

22   Georgetown University with renewable energy

23   would provide. We continue to lose Maryland

24   forest land to development as years go on. The

25   health of the Chesapeake Bay, the protection of

1   its biodiversity will be greatly affected by

2   this project, so I ask that we just all do

3   everything within our power to protect the

4   area. Thank you.

5   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Ken Hastings

6   and Ann Lewis.

7   QUESTIONER: Good evening. My name's Ken

8   Hastings. I live at 39044 Holly Drive,

9   Mechanicsville 20659. I provided you with a

10   letter that I wrote to Secretary Grumbles

11   hoping that he would be here and I see that he

12   is and I appreciate that. I'll provide

13   electronic copies for the rest of you.

14   The application is incomplete due to the

15   absence of any alternative site analysis and

16   COMAR says MDE can't issue the permit without

17   this analysis. According to the record of this

18   project, late 2016 the applicant entered into a

19   purchase option agreement with the property

20   owners. One year later, the issue of

21   jurisdictional impacts is raised in a letter

22   from Mr. Thompson to Dane Bauer confirmed that

23   the project didn't impact jurisdictional areas,

24   no Non-Tidal Wetlands approvals would be

25   required for the location of the solar panels.

1   However, the impacts associated with

2   infrastructure and grid connection were

3   involved and permits for those would be

4   required.

5   On 5/7, 2018 the applicant contacted the

6   Maryland Historical Trust announcing the need

7   to add yet another piece of property, the Smith

8   Point property, to the project for substation

9   grid connection requirements. On 5/8, 2018 the

10   Charles County Board of Appeals approved a

11   special exception to proceed with the project.

12   They alleged unique location advantages of the

13   property were touted by the applicant without

14   mentioning the fact that the grid was 1,700

15   feet for the border of the original project

16   required purchase yet another parcel to reach

17   the grid.

18   The MDE permit application submitted on

19   January 28th without an alternative site

20   analysis, and this is from COMAR, the physical,

21   economic and demographic characteristics of

22   alternative sites considered. Impacts from

23   both the original property and the Smith Point

24   property were included. From this timeline it

25   seems clear the applicant never intended to

1   consider other sites.

2   The impacts of the solar farm first

3   surfaced over two years after the original

4   option to purchase was signed. If the

5   applicant didn't know there were impacts

6   requiring a permit, he had no reason to survey

7   for alternatives. After Mr. Thompson reminded

8   the applicant they added Smith Point impacts to

9   the mix but there's no indication that

10   alternative sites were considered for this

11   purchase either.

12   In 1997 the Summer Hills project was

13   rejected by Maryland Department of the

14   Environment for lack of alternative site

15   analysis. The appeal of that decision in 1988

16   with a collusion involved that MDE was

17   justified in denying the permit because there

18   was no alternative site analysis.

19   Note that the amount of the disturbance is

20   irrelevant unless it is zero, in which case the

21   applicant doesn't need a permit. For any other

22   amount of disturbance, both a permit and an

23   alternative analysis are required. Thank you.

24   MS. SIGILLITO: Ann Lewis.

25   QUESTIONER: Thank you. And I want to

1   note that I live at 3400 Reservoir Road in

2   Georgetown, a block from Georgetown University,

3   but we spent our summers in Nanjemoy.

4   As you know, I represent City Wildlife in

5   Washington, D.C. Our mission is to protect

6   wildlife and wildlife habitat in the area. And

7   our earlier remarks are part of the record and

8   I don't need to deal with those.

9   I just want to point out today an

10   observation that I've had continuously

11   throughout this process, which is a concern for

12   the lack of transparency in this process.

13   First, we were originally told something

14   about 210 or 227 acres and then all of a sudden

15   there's another 50 acres for a substation that

16   we were unaware of. Second, as a retired

17   architect, I'm used to seeing and doing myself

18   presentation drawings for meetings such as this

19   and I found the presentation materials in

20   addition to the basic environmental analyses

21   quite inadequate for this kind of presentation.

22   The presentation materials have never shown or

23   represented the true nature of the habitat or

24   the natural resources that this project will

25   destroy.

1   And, finally, in the earlier hearing we

2   were promised the environmental report from

3   Georgetown March 20th and we just recently

4   learned that the report's been completed but

5   it's not being released. These actions convey

6   a lack of transparency in the process and a

7   lack of respect for public access to

8   information that these projects require.

9   So at the very least, I request that the

10   Georgetown report be made publicly available

11   before this body takes any action. Thank you

12   so much.

13   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Next up Eric

14   Lewis, Rosa Hans, Marcea Cummings.

15   QUESTIONER: Good evening. I'm Eric Lewis

16   and I just wanted to come and speak on behalf

17   of the forest and the water, always. I

18   strongly oppose this project and I hope that

19   you deny their permit. Just wanted to put some

20   things into perspective for you.

21   A 32.5 megawatt system that Georgetown is

22   proposing is going to create at least 3,250,800

23   square feet of impervious surface. I really

24   want to highlight this because for every inch

25   of rain that we get that equates to .623

1   gallons of water per inch of rain. So what we

2   would be looking at here is around two million

3   gallons of water sheeting off of the surface of

4   these solar panels and rushing into two very

5   critical streams.

6   On the heaviest rainfall day last year,

7   July 24th, that would have been eight million

8   gallons of water flowing into the stream. Now

9   I don't know what kind of mitigation they are

10   proposing to slow down that amount of water and

11   allow to it infiltrate, but even beyond the

12   direct impervious surface that's going to be

13   created of 3.2 million square feet, we're

14   looking at another 13 million square feet in

15   total, if you count the substation and

16   everything else, you're looking at over 13

17   million square feet of land that is going to

18   have drastically reduced infiltration, because

19   compacted grass does not allow for water to

20   infiltrate as deeply as eight to 12 to 18

21   inches of forest soil that you get from 150

22   year old forests that we have sitting here

23   protected.

24   Now also to speak to the value for us of

25   that forest, every year for a 50 year old mixed

1   deciduous forest, you're looking at around

2   30,000 pounds of carbon dioxide being

3   sequestered from the atmosphere and you're

4   looking at around 22,000 pounds of oxygen being

5   produced.

6   Now this forest is a little bit older than

7   that, but we can say that based on those

8   numbers this forest is responsible for at least

9   nine million pounds of carbon sequestration per

10   year and 6.6 million pounds of oxygen being

11   produced for us each year.

12   I also want to point out that if in their

13   studies they didn't analyze the carbon content

14   of the soil, eight inches of soil per square

15   foot has 2.5 pounds of carbon. So you're

16   looking at over 32 million pounds of carbon

17   that would be released into the atmosphere just

18   by disturbing these soils and then all those

19   nutrients are going to rush into the stream,

20   lead to eutrophication, anaerobic conditions

21   and cyanobacteria down stream. So please deny

22   the permit.

23   MS. SIGILLITO: Burt Lament, Marcea

24   Cummings and then Michael somebody.

25   QUESTIONER: Good evening. My name is

1   Rosa Hans. I live at 45547 Stoney Run Drive,

2   Great Mills, Maryland. Thank you for allowing

3   us the opportunity to once again come before

4   you and express our concerns about this

5   project.

6   I was really looking forward to hearing

7   the results of the environmental report that

8   Georgetown was supposed to be doing between the

9   last hearing and this one. And so I feel like

10   my comments are going to be more of the same

11   rather than a response to what would hopefully

12   be some new information that would share with

13   us what exactly is happening behind the scenes

14   to this immense area of forest.

15   In today's political climate, state based

16   action is the way that I believe we're going to

17   tackle the crisis that is climate change and so

18   it's really important, I think it's the reason

19   why most people in the room are here today, to

20   have each project very carefully considered and

21   the take a look at every aspect of the

22   permitting process as it relates to climate

23   change.

24   Someone said recently that it's like

25   getting a diagnosis for a fatal disease. You

1   might think about all of your problems the day

2   before but once you get that diagnosis there's

3   only one problem and right now our one problem

4   is climate change.

5   And so this forest is immense and it's

6   been around for a long time. It's ancestral

7   homeland, as people mentioned, of the

8   Piscataway people. And the impact on the

9   entire area including of course the Tier II

10   streams that are of the highest quality that we

11   have in Maryland, just cannot be overstated, it

12   cannot be boiled down to a mathematical

13   equation that gives us a perfect answer.

14   This transition from combustible to

15   renewable requires leadership at the local,

16   state and business levels and it requires

17   balance. So in order to truly mitigate climate

18   change, it's necessary to decrease greenhouse

19   gas output but also preserve and expand

20   forested land. And the impact on storm water,

21   water is our life here in Southern Maryland and

22   throughout the state, and I hope that all of

23   those concerns are addressed in handling of

24   this matter, thank you.

25   QUESTIONER: My name is Valerie Proctor.

1   Marcea Cummings will be submitting her

2   testimony through e-mail at the address

3   provided.

4   My family has been a part of Charles

5   County for generations. I, myself, moved here

6   over a decade ago. I have watched the change

7   in it overall, in its beauty with trees and a

8   variety of animals and is slowly being

9   overturned with homes, buildings and empty

10 store fronts. To me this is just another loss

11 for our county and our people. It's taking

12 away from the beauty which has always existed.

13   This is an opportunity for us to stop this

14 madness from happening before it's too late and

15 Charles County is no more than just another

16 cement jungle.

17   I understand with the family -- what the

18 family is going through that owns the property

19 because my own family is going through the same

20 thing, but it is unfair to continue to sell out

21 to folks who have no good intentions for our

22 county. If there was any benefit for the rest

23 of our county I could see it, but all it is

24 doing is taking from us. Why do we continue to

25 allow this to happen to our county. Will we

1   stop it and own our own county sincerely,

2   Marcea.

3   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Michael Nephew

4   Carrie Bedal, Holiday Wagner.

5   QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Valerie

6   Proctor and I'm speaking on behalf of Michael

7   Nephew.

8   Although I am not a resident of the area

9   in question, and neither is Origis or

10   Georgetown University I, however, do go into

11   Southern Maryland and enjoy the wetlands and

12   waterways in that area. The MD Solar 1 Shugart

13   Valley project claims to have a very small

14   footprint. I believe that the footprint they

15   are referring to is where the support posts

16   come into the ground. However, the solar

17   panels will cover a larger area and direct the

18   runoff to one edge of the solar panel. This

19   directed runoff will result in a higher volume

20   of water coming off of one side and hitting the

21   ground in one smaller area just like when rain

22   runs off of your roof. This will result in a

23   small gully that will direct the runoff at a

24   higher rate into the streams.

25   The solar panels directing the rain to one

1   side of the panels will also result in less

2   rain being absorbed by the ground. Both of

3   these will result in higher runoff rates that

4   will also cause more sediment to enter the

5   wetlands and waterways.

6   What also needs to be looked at is what

7   type of weed control will be used at the site

8   and any weed control substance that will be

9   used will be in the runoff into the Wetlands

10   and waterways.

11   Origis has stated that where the power

12   lines go they will leave the roots in the

13   ground. What will eventually happen is these

14   roots will decay. When this happens the ground

15   will collapse making gullies. Once this

16   happens, more sediment will run into the

17   wetlands, waterways. In addition, the

18   unprotected gullies will increase the sediment

19   runoff right into the wetlands and waterway.

20   Origis and Georgetown University have

21   known that a substation would be needed.

22   However, they are keeping these as two separate

23   projects so the full impact will not be as

24   readily recognized. They most likely are

25   claiming that this is an electric utility

1   project and not their project. While it is

2   true that it is not their project, the reality

3   is that it is needed because of their project

4   and as such should not be looked at as a

5   separate project, rather both need to be looked

6   at as part of the overall project of what is

7   truly needed for the MD Solar 1 project which

8   includes both solar arrays as well as a

9   substation. Anything else is an attempt to

10   disguise what the true affects of the project

11   are. Sincerely, Michael Nephew.

12   MS. SIGILLITO: Carrie Badel, Holiday

13   Radner.

14   QUESTIONER: Hello, my name's Carrie

15   Badel. I'm a resident of the state of

16   Maryland. Thank you for taking the time to

17   take testimony today. I was not at the hearing

18   in February. I've only recently learned about

19   this project, but been a 10 year resident of La

20   Plata and have a family here.

21   We were attracted to this area in part

22   because of the natural resources that are here

23   and even though we've only been here for a

24   decade, we have also seen the erosion of those

25   natural resources, which is disappointing.

1   When I became aware of this project, I did

2   some research about it and I was actually on

3   the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to

4   find out what targeted ecological area means.

5   So reading from that website I found out that

6   lands in watersheds of high ecological value

7   that have been identified as conservation

8   priorities by the Maryland DNR for natural

9   resource protection. These areas represent the

10 most ecologically valuable in the state and are

11 the best of the best, so I'm confused as to why

12 this would be an area that would be sold to

13 Georgetown University for solar panels. I

14 would not like to see that happen for our

15 community.

16   This community, the entire Southern

17 Maryland community, is already home to many

18 power plants, including coal fired, natural gas

19 and nuclear and I think that we've done enough

20 to supply power to Washington, D.C. I don't

21 think another power plant should be constructed

22 down here at our expense. Thank you.

23   QUESTIONER: Yes. I'm Dr. Holiday Wagner.

24 I'm an ecologist and I'm a resident of Prince

25 George's County.

1   First of all, this project does not make

2 sense to me at all. You're removing trees

3 which absorb carbon dioxide and what you're

4 doing is replacing them with something which is

5 more efficient which is the solar panels, but

6 the solar panels, it takes energy to build

7 them, so how long does that payoff, and I

8 haven't done any of the math, I'm just sort of

9 going this does not make sense.

10   So what I'm saying is we have a lose/lose

11 situation here in terms of carbon dioxide. It

12 just doesn't make sense. To sit there and take

13 out trees to replace these that are more

14 efficient. So I suggest a win/win situation,

15 which is a solar panel is used to create shade

16 which basically not only takes care of the

17 carbon dioxide but it also mitigates the heat

18 islands. It just so happens the first time I

19 heard about this project I also, I think the

20 Washington Post Put out a heat map for

21 Washington, D.C., the heat islands.

22   And I thought, oh, look at that, you could

23 put it over this whole area and you wouldn't be

24 running all this air-conditioning all the time.

25 So I'm sitting here going wait a minute.

1   That's really a win/win. You could put it over

2   on top of your parking lots and it's cooler for

3   the cars and you don't use air-conditioning so

4   much in your cars.

5   But, anyway, you don't have to go into

6   this lose/lose situation. One of the things

7   that kind of astounds me is that Georgetown

8   University, they are so much in themselves

9   about, okay, we're doing all this for the

10 environment but I've just learned a new term

11 which is called stove piping. And stove piping

12 says, okay, CO_2 up here, we're going to solve

13 the CO_2 problem and never mind the fact that an

14 ecological system, you're actually losing

15 species. I don't know much about the streams

16 but I know that there's going to be runoff.

17   And we're into a period of climate change,

18 so your going to have more droughts and you're

19 going to have more really heavy rains and the

20 trees actually really mitigate that because the

21 rain doesn't hit the ground and run off into

22 the stream, along with whatever petroleum

23 products that somebody was talking about weed

24 killer.

25   So it's going to be warmer in there, so we

1   have more heat island kind of affects and we

2   have more invasive species and there's this

3   wonderful thing that came out of the U.N. which

4   talks about we can't afford to lose species.

5   And don't think about birds, you could, but

6   really think about the things you can't even

7   see that may be the only place that you can

8   find it.

9   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Noah Black,

10   Alex Winter, Will Becker.

11   QUESTIONER: Good evening. My name is

12   Noah Black. I'm coming from Northern Virginia,

13   in what is now called Fairfax, which is also

14   Piscataway land and I believe it's additionally

15   in a clutch tank.

16   I'm here as representative of several

17   George Mason University organizations,

18   including Students Against Israeli Apartheid,

19   the Native American and Indigenous Alliance and

20   Radical Organizers for Socialism Inequity and

21   we represent over 150 students at George Mason,

22   specification the Fairfax campus.

23   We just want to express our solidarity for

24   a lot of the people who have been making

25   comments today on indigenous justice grounds

1   and environmental justice grounds in opposition

2   to the plan by Georgetown University and we

3   want to emphasize that one of the main things

4   that we believe that's needed currently in

5   pursuing environmental justice is connecting it

6   to indigenous and racial justice.

7   It doesn't make much sense to us to move

8   into indigenous lands without consultative

9   processes, without consultative processes

10   violating consent of native peoples and harming

11   ecological systems in ways that we haven't

12   properly evaluated yet. I'm not going to take

13   the full three minutes because a lot of people

14   have already said things that I wanted to say,

15   thank you.

16   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

17   QUESTIONER: Alex Winter, Bryans Road. If

18   there were actually a climate crisis and then

19   what you do is you would look for everything

20   you could do to address it. And even if you

21   are looking at it as it's very late in the

22   game, we're going to have adapt. It's a

23   distinction without a difference. If there

24   really were a big problem with climate change

25   you would not consider taking off forest to put

1   on solar when the solar could go on existing

2   impervious surfaces, like rooftops, industrial

3   buildings, which could have been done in La

4   Plata, but the city of La Plata didn't do it

5   because it is run by dinosaurs.

6   There is -- it does not pass the laugh

7   test that this is done for sustainability. It's

8   done out of power and greed. Greed for power,

9   greed for money. That's all there is. The

10   rest is just the most absurd cover which is

11   counting on people being so dispirited that

12   they can't, that they realize we can't do

13   anything about it. They're the people who give

14   orders and there are the people who take

15   orders, so we should just take orders, but

16   there are a lot of people who don't want to

17   take that kind of orders because there actually

18   really is a climate crisis. It's nonsense and

19   it's obscene to do this project.

20   MS. SIGILLITO: Will Decker.

21   QUESTIONER: Good evening, Will Decker.

22   I'm here to oppose what's neither a green

23   project nor one with any substantial gains,

24   including any energy gains for the residents of

25   Charles County or citizens of Maryland. This

1   is nothing more than a net loss, big business

2   industrial project that has misrepresented the

3   site characteristics and attempted to green

4   wash the devastation that would most certainly

5   be the result. This foreign corporation should

6   receive no exemptions from this body in

7   furtherance of this larger scale, destructive

8   and narrowly focused idea. Please deny any

9   requested permits to circumvent environmental

10   protection, thank you.

11   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Elizabeth

12   Decker and Bill Pyle.

13   QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Elizabeth Decker.

14   I'm an environment educator and I'm here just

15   to ask that you please listen to and strongly

16   consider the shear volume of public outcry and

17   exercise all governance at your disposal to

18   either delay or defer this project.

19   I understand that Georgetown University is

20   in possession of the results of an independent

21   study and that their good faith effort would

22   have been to release those findings prior to

23   this hearing. We certainly don't have that so

24   that's one piece of information I think that

25   we're lacking. But the larger issue is that

1   we're facing a worldwide collapse of

2   biodiversity. And many very articulate people

3   have suggested that we need transformative

4   change.

5   But at our local level my question to you

6   is who should deliver that transformative

7   change. Where should that happen. And if not

8   in this case with so much destruction for very

9   little gain such that we have a net loss

10   scenario, what would be the project that would

11   be denied if not this one.

12   I've also heard discussions about a

13   blueprint for solar for Maryland and I think

14   that any projects that are this significant

15   should be deferred until such time as we have

16   an understanding of where solar should be

17   sighted and a full representation of all of the

18   facts to allow us to make a better decision.

19   So I would respectfully request that you

20   deny any environmental permits at least until

21   we have more meaningful and useful information,

22   thank you.

23   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

24   QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Bill

25   Pyle. I'm from Dunkirk, Maryland. There's

1   several truisms here you don't improve

2   something by destroying it. And also we have

3   unintended consequences for many of our actions

4   and that is true for this project.

5   The clear cutting of 240 acres of trees is

6   a step backward in addressing the development

7   of clean, renewable energy. We should be

8   preserving our forest, not destroying them,

9   when other options are available.

10   If millions of homes and businesses across

11   the U.S. have been able to install solar panels

12   successfully, why isn't this proposed solar

13   farm following that model. These homeowners

14   and businesses have reduced their energy bills

15   and at the same time are producing massive

16   amounts of clean renewable energy.

17   Why isn't Georgetown University using this

18   approach. It has many buildings on campus

19   which could be used as platforms to mount this

20   solar farm. Also many residences and

21   businesses in Washington, D.C. that are

22   interested in solar energy production could be

23   invited into partnership with Georgetown

24   University to provide roof and parking lot

25   space to install solar panels. This could

1   stimulate other organizations which may be

2   limited in space to offer funding for

3   additional projects. All of these would

4   protect our trees by only using existing clear

5   space rather than forested space.

6   I am sure that Georgetown University would

7   not want trees on its property in Washington,

8   D.C. clear-cut for this project. The sound of

9   chainsaws for this purpose on campus would

10 cause much concern and complaints from students

11 and faculty. The trees would be missed for the

12 peaceful atmosphere they provide for the homes,

13 wildlife and for absorbing CO_2 to make the air

14 fresher.

15   Experts have testified on many reasons why

16 trees should be preserved. The trees that are

17 proposed to be cut would have an impact on

18 water quality in the streams that are part of

19 the important system that provides water, one

20 of the most important resources to people and

21 all life on our planet.

22   Why should rural Maryland be expected to

23 suffer the loss of forest. Earlier speakers

24 provided information on other tracts of land in

25 Charles County that are perfectly suited for

1   the solar panels. When good alternatives to

2   clear-cutting forest land are available, and

3   there are, they should be used.

4   Also, when electrons move, did you see

5   that one up there, it came from Ohio, that one

6   came from Pennsylvania, that one came from West

7   Virginia. The grid is a wonderful medium for

8   moving electrons, which is what we're talking

9   about here.

10   If you can put solar panels close to where

11   it's being produced and used, you save on

12   losses in the transmission lines. Why are we

13   putting it down here in the middle of the rural

14   area when you could have it in Washington,

15   D.C., perhaps Washington, D.C. could be become

16   Washington AC if this project were done

17   correctly. Thank you.

18   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Tracy Blair.

19   QUESTIONER: Hi, my name's Tracy Blair. I

20   wasn't going to speak but as I sat here my son

21   drew a picture and it just -- I reeled. I

22   needed to come up here and say that the idea of

23   cutting down a forest to put up solar panels is

24   laughable to my children. When I said that we

25   were going to come here and speak about --

1   stand up and speak to the ridiculousness of

2   this project, all I said was they're cutting

3   down trees to put up solar panels and they

4   literally laughed out loud.

5   Children understand that this is

6   ridiculous. So I don't understand how adults

7   are sitting here having these drawn out

8   conversations when it should be so obvious. I

9   feel really emotional about it. Just walk into

10   a forest and marvel at the way that the

11   efficiency, the way that the trees and the

12   plants occupy every single niche. We should be

13   preserving the forest so we can go in and learn

14   how to live wisely with nature. We shouldn't

15   be cutting down the forest and putting up solar

16   panels in an effort to somehow sort of mitigate

17   the amount of destruction that we're causing to

18   the environmental. It just really makes zero

19   sense to me.

20   And I understand that I'm rambling because

21   I feel emotional about this, but really on

22   behalf of sanity, on behalf of children

23   everywhere who hopefully successive generations

24   of humans will continue to live on this planet,

25   but as long as we do shortsighted things as

1   cutting down forest to put up solar panels that

2   is seriously in question. So on behalf of

3   children and on behalf of trees, I heartly ask

4   that you deny this project.

5   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Linda Reading.

6   QUESTIONER: Good evening, Linda Reading.

7   Origis, from the Republic of Cypress, was on

8   the hunt for two things, they needed natural

9   resources and officials who lacked the

10   sophistication to recognize the value of those

11   resources and protect them.

12   With predatory practices similar to the

13   cigarette and opioid industry and despite the

14   know risks, Origis is going to cut the heart

15   out of our Nanjemoy forest. I know we have

16   conditions on Origis but what if they fail.

17   Well, I guess they have a male receptacle here

18   in Maryland and maybe one in Delaware and

19   probably one in Miami, but I guess we could go

20   up to D.C. right to the embassy and go, hello,

21   Origis, Republic of Cypress, can you put us in

22   touch with Origis, we're Charles County,

23   Maryland. And they will go, Charles County

24   who. And that's the end of the knock-knock

25   joke. We have no enforcement.

1   We will never be at a loss for companies

2   like Origis. There will always be those that

3   are willing to destroy our natural resources

4   for profit and no one in this room, no one has

5   the power to say there will not be any impacts

6   from the stream crossing. There will be

7   impacts. We know that. That's a fact.

8   And one of the greatest impacts is the

9   denuding of this landscape and the major

10   excavation that's going to go on to create a

11   different topography.

12   In this time of climate crisis and

13   extinction crisis should we be wondering if we

14   should destroy our forests and our streams.

15   Please have the courage to protect our waters

16   and Origis should look for an alternative site.

17   I know they are very proud of the

18   deforestation, you can see it on their website,

19   but that is not the way to go anymore, thank

20   you.

21   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Bonnie Bic.

22   QUESTIONER: Hello, my name is Bonnie Bic

23   and I live in Oxon Hill. And I'm here speaking

24   for the second time on this issue because I am

25   critically concerned about the state of

1   Maryland permitting this in a time of climate

2   crisis. I would like to see Maryland declare a

3   climate crisis because it affects all of our

4   future and it's not -- we don't actually know

5   how much we can control this, even if we do 100

6   percent pivot so that's what I'm recommending.

7   And I'm very interested in there being a

8   socioeconomic study and I'd like that to be

9   shared with the public because these are Tier

10   II streams and the fact that they are in

11   pristine nature, really to me says that they

12   should be saved, not given a chance to get less

13   assimilative capacity.

14   And the other point that I would like to

15   make is that there should have been, and I

16   haven't seen it and I've looked, an alternative

17   study for this because it's so clear that there

18   are alternatives. If there weren't

19   alternatives, we'd be in a real bind because

20   we'd have to be choosing between two different

21   paths to address climate change, but we have a

22   direct way of providing the solar without the

23   environmental destruction.

24   And so I'm just appalled that Georgetown

25   hasn't released their study and yet they have

1 it. And they certainly led us to believe that

2 they were going to share it with us when we met

3 with them. And so I hope that the record

4 remains open until we can comment on that study

5 and put that study on the record.

6   And I appreciate MDE's careful attention

7 to this issue. It's critical and it's our

8 future symbolically. We can't stop some of the

9 things that are happening in other far away

10 places, but this is in our territory and it's a

11 34,000 acre forest that would be a fragmented

12 and we have to save it. It's symbolic and it's

13 reel. Thank you very much.

14   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Jan Russell

15 and then Richard Cook.

16   QUESTIONER: I lived in Nanjemoy. I've

17 been there about 25 years -- Jan Russell. I'm

18 also a nurse. I've been one for 40 years, all

19 locally. I love this community. I love

20 Southern Maryland and the jewel of Southern

21 Maryland is Nanjemoy. And what we need on it

22 is that it stays as beautiful as it is and that

23 it's used to teach our children and entertain

24 ourselves on weekends and stay sane when life

25 is too busy.

1   This debate about solar farms is going on

2   all across the country. It's not new. I know

3   in places like Iowa what they're opting to do

4   is ask farmers to have parcels that aren't as

5   productive to put like 15 acre pieces. 250

6   acres at a time is a big swath of trees and

7   wildlife and it's just too much. It's

8   unthinkable to me. It's unbearable.

9   I hope that they would look at the science

10   of it, but more than that, it's the ethics of

11   it, the morals of it. This is what we have

12   down here to -- it could be an engine for

13   economic opportunity. We've done many

14   proposals for Nanjemoy and its ecotourism.

15   It's foolish. So I'm asking you to think about

16   it. Thank you.

17   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

18   QUESTIONER: Good evening, Dr. Richard

19   Cook, Hughesville, Maryland resident, president

20   of the Charles County Medical Society. Thank

21   you for having me speak here.

22   I'd like to start out with a study done by

23   the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in

24   2017. It talks about Charles County having the

25   fourth highest total ecosystem services in the

1   state which equals to approximately $290 per

2   month for every citizen or $535.5 million per

3   year. That equals 1/8th of Charles County's

4   total economy. So how -- and in what our

5   ecosystem services, I'm sure you know, but I'd

6   like to educate some of the people here today.

7   Basically an ecosystem serves as any monetary

8   or non-monetary benefit people receive from

9   their environment. So when these ecosystem

10   services are lost they have to be replaced with

11   pricey, man-made restorative alternatives. And

12   this, of course, is at the taxpayer's expense.

13   And, again, we're talking about 1/8th of

14   Charles County's economy.

15   If not replaced, we suffer consequences of

16   this climate catastrophe, which is flooding,

17   poor air quality, water quality, increased in

18   health, disease, tick, arthropod vector

19   disease, et cetera, et cetera, which again we

20   end up paying for.

21   I'd also like to point out that when you

22   look at the gold standard for climate expert

23   recommendations you tend to look at the U.N.

24   recommendation, the Paris Climate Accord

25   Agreements, the Marrakesh Climate Change

1   Agreements, the World Meteorological

2   Organization recommendations and in none of

3   their vast literature do they say anything

4   remotely close to tearing down forest to put up

5   solar panels. They are all for sustainable

6   alternatives. Thank you.

7   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. That was

8   everyone who was at the February 27th hearing

9   who did not get a chance to speak that night

10   and then people who were not at that hearing,

11   but this was the first hearing they came to and

12   then we had a few people that have spoken at

13   both hearings.

14   Before we close, though, I'd like to offer

15   anyone an opportunity who has changed their

16   mind who signed in and would like to make a

17   comment for the record. You don't have to and

18   I would next tell you how you can submit

19   written comments.

20   Is there anyone else who haven't had a

21   chance to speak that would like to speak.

22   QUESTIONER: My name's Karen Rohan,

23   R-O-H-A-N, and I would just like to add that in

24   my home town of Rockville, which is quite close

25   to Georgetown University, there are numerous

1   very large expanses of property, including

2   industrial, including the derelict White Flint

3   Mall, just many, many places of developed

4   impermeable surfaces that seemed absolutely

5   perfect for solar panels. There is actually

6   one area that I was made aware of just last

7   week, basically just north of my house, that is

8   an industrial area where the owner has been

9   looking to find an alternative use for the

10   property. So I would just like to mention that

11   there are many, many locations that Georgetown

12   could consider instead of this pristine, wild

13   land. Thank you.

14   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Is there

15   anyone else who hasn't had a chance to speak

16   that would like to make a comment?

17   QUESTIONER: The person who was on the

18   list for the first hearing February 27th has

19   submitted to me something that I can say on

20   their behalf.

21   MS. SIGILLITO: Could you speak into the

22   mic and give me the person's name?

23   QUESTIONER: Natebo Maquena.

24   MS. SIGILLITO: Yes.

25   QUESTIONER: My name is Natebo Maquena and

1   I grew up in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I could

2   not be here today but I would like to adamantly

3   oppose permitting for the Nanjemoy

4   deforestation project. The land where Origis

5   and Georgetown University plans to build the

6   solar farm are on stolen petition Piscataway

7   ancestral homelands. It's infuriating and vile

8   that neither Origis or the university did not

9   do proper stakeholder engagements by consulting

10   Piscataway leadership. While I am a strong

11   supporter of renewable energy, the industry

12   cannot replicate the same destructivist model

13   as the fossil fuel industry. If Georgetown

14   would like to support a clean future, it should

15   not seek to do so by deforestation and

16   destruction of Native lands, thank you.

17   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Last call,

18   anyone else?

19   QUESTIONER: My name is Kevin Grimes. I

20   live in Nanjemoy. I followed this from the

21   very beginning. I was at the first meeting

22   through the county, through the board of

23   special appeals and I'd just -- I saw a letter

24   that the economic development for Charles

25   County wrote saying this would bring in tens of

1   millions of dollars and I just think that the

2   falsehoods that have come with this project

3   just need to stop and someone needs to point

4   out that this just isn't true. Over and over

5   we're hearing things that aren't true. There

6   will be no impacts, the water will not affect

7   the streams and the runoff and, I mean, the

8   county could have done more in this situation

9   to protect itself, to protect its citizens. So

10   a lot of people are saying shame on Origis and

11   shame on Georgetown, but really shame on the

12   county also. I really hope they do a better

13   job of protecting its citizens and water

14   quality and air quality. That's it. Thank

15   you.

16   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

17   QUESTIONER: I'm George Bedell. I live up

18   the street in La Plata. I'm a transplant.

19   I've been here in the county for 16 years.

20   I'll keep it short. I think that the real

21   reason to live here in Charles County is the

22   natural beauty. If we all wanted to get

23   crammed into D.C., we can try and make those

24   choices but what we have here is a beautiful

25   environmental. And I really think that it

1   should be up to you all, our representatives,

2   to try and protect the things that make our

3   life here in the county so enjoyable. So I

4   think rather than providing an opportunity for

5   the university to do their green washing

6   project, you ought to think about what's best

7   for our county residents.

8   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

9   QUESTIONER: My name's Bill Pyle from

10   Dunkirk. For five years I've studied what has

11   happened at Cove Point. Now I know that's over

12   on our side the Patuxent and this is over here.

13   But the myth that any revenue will come from

14   these energy projects is truly a myth. Over

15   there, Cove Point is pulling $235 gallons a

16   day, and this is high-quality drinking water.

17   If you went to Wal-mart, you'd pay a dollar per

18   gallon. That's $235,000 a day. The aquifers

19   are dropping two to four feet a year. Arsenic

20   levels are going up. Calvert County's in very

21   delicate situation.

22   The idea that they're going to provide any

23   revenue is zero. They say they're going to

24   give $40 million. Well, if you do the math

25   you'll figure out that they're going to use far

1   more water, high-quality water, and a lot of

2   jurisdictions now are having to treat their

3   water. These energy projects don't show that

4   on the surface. Sure, they will say we're

5   going to create jobs, we're going to create

6   energy, we're going to give you tax revenue.

7   What happens in the long run, unforeseen

8   consequences, unintended consequences, happen

9   and these projects have the potential for that.

10   And this one would start a new model for these

11   farms, these solar farms, that would cascade

12   throughout the state of Maryland, which would

13   be bad for the state, bad for the economy, bad

14   for the environment, bad for the citizens.

15   There are no two ways about it. The companies

16   themselves will profit. The citizens will not

17   and the environmental will suffer in the

18   long-term, thank you.

19   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. I believe

20   there's one last person who indicated they'd

21   like to speak.

22   QUESTIONER: Hi, my name's Victoria Ma

23   from Georgetown University at the Masters

24   School of Public Policy. I just want to

25   reiterate what I said last time. I don't think

1 this project is a good idea. It's in a Tier I

2 water source and we've all heard that that's

3 going to damage the water. I don't think that

4 Origis has planned to offset the damages is

5 correct, like their plan to put plants down for

6 pollinators is such a weak comparison to the

7 carbon sinks that the forest actually is and

8 the strength of the forest to suck the carbon

9 out of the air and sequester it is much more

10 than the offsets that Origis is saying that

11 they're going to provide.

12   I just -- I don't support this. I don't

13 think you should give them the Wetlands permit

14 because it's going to damage it way more than

15 it's going to help. Thank you.

16   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Is there

17 anyone else who has not made a comment at the

18 last hearing or tonight's hearing that would

19 like to make a comment before we close?

20   QUESTIONER: Hi, thank you. My name is

21 Elizabeth Ford. I'm a resident of Southern

22 Maryland. I'd like to reiterate a lot of the

23 points that folks have made before me today and

24 probably in the last hearing. I feel that it's

25 very counterintuitive to be sitting here

1   speaking against solar in favor of

2   conservation. It feels like those two things

3   should be much more closely interlinked with a

4   common purpose. But primarily I'd like to say

5   that I just was reading in one of these

6   handouts that Georgetown University has

7   partnered with the Ivy Plus Sustainability

8   Climate Pledge on 13 of the most prominent

9   academic institutions in the country. These

10   are educational systems which are supposed to

11   house the best and brightest that our country

12   has to offer and there are new technologies

13   being developed in the field of solar. I hope

14   that the powers that be can deny or defer the

15   decision on this particular project being done

16   and compromising a critical part of the

17   environment to allow Georgetown to reassess its

18   alternatives as far as location and also

19   alternatives in technology that can be used to

20   create their carbon neutral impact that they're

21   looking to do. There are other technologies

22   available and incoming technologies that I

23   think should be considered as well as

24   alternative locations.

25   It's commendable that anyone would want to

1   create a carbon neutral situation for a school,

2   for their own home, for their communities, but

3   the way that this is going with the lack of

4   transparency and compromising such a critical

5   ecosystem is just incredibly counterintuitive

6   to the ultimate goal that they're trying to

7   achieve. Thank you.

8   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Anyone else

9   who has not offered comments at either

10   tonight's hearing or the February hearing?

11   QUESTIONER: Bonnie Bic, Oxon Hill. The

12   additional point is that I would like to

13   virtually put on record the DNR ecosystem

14   services study that was done for Charles

15   County, because I think if -- I would like that

16   to be something that gets attention, looking at

17   the socioeconomic study and have that be one of

18   the reference points there, because it talks of

19   the value of the forest and the value of the

20   water quality in Charles County and it was the

21   first of all of the ecological economic studies

22   done in Maryland and it was done for Charles

23   County and I'm putting it on the record and it

24   will come via e-mail, thank you.

25   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. Is there

1   anyone else who has not offered comments either

2   at tonight's hearing or the February hearing.

3   QUESTIONER: Eric Lewis, Frederick

4   Maryland. Just wanted to add earlier there was

5   a false equivalency that was made there to

6   logging the land for timber being the

7   environment equivalent to putting up a solar

8   field, but that's absolutely fossil, because

9   when you build a solar field you need to grade

10   out the land which means you have to disturb

11   all of the millions of pounds of carbon that I

12   mentioned previously that are stored in the top

13   eight inches of soil.

14   The other aspect of that is that most of

15   the trees in a mixed deciduous forest in

16   Maryland are not going to die when they are

17   logged. So, for example, tulip poplar, maples,

18   oaks, beeches, black locust, all of these trees

19   coppice very readily, so when you cut them down

20   to the ground they will resprout from their

21   roots and return to their original vigor in a

22   much shorter period of time. And so the

23   topsoil and the trees would remain alive where

24   that would not happen with a solar field. It

25   would all be reduced to compacted subsoil and

1   create a lot of impervious surface.

2   I'd also just like to highlight that an

3   archaeological impact study needs to be going

4   along with this because this is very sacred

5   land to the Piscataway peoples and little

6   glimpses and truths about their history could

7   be revealed by exploring this site for

8   archaeological artifacts.

9   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you.

10   QUESTIONER: Gwynn Bagley from Charles

11   County. I would respectfully ask that MDE deny

12   this shortsighted permit. In a search for a

13   peer reviewed research on the environmental

14   impacts of solar farms I found that it was a

15   growing field but that the rush to capitalize

16   on a cheaper way to put up solar panels was

17   raising alarms and speeding past our ability to

18   study and regulate them. I wish the

19   precautionary principle was applied more often

20   when it comes to environmental issues, but any

21   project that claims to be sustainable should

22   pay particular attention to it. Let's not have

23   our forests and our environment in Charles

24   County be the site where future researches can

25   point to and say clearly this was a very

1   terrible idea. Many have said it very well,

2   but we don't have to choose between solar power

3   and climate change mitigation and ecosystem and

4   biodiversity. We can have both of those

5   things.

6   I think Georgetown should use their

7   considerable money and expertise to find an

8   appropriate site for this project and keep

9   development where it is appropriate. Thank you

10   for providing this forum to speak.

11   MS. SIGILLITO: Thank you. At this point

12   I'll explain where we go from here. The formal

13   hearing record will remain open for three weeks

14   or until at least midnight on Monday, June 3rd

15   of 2019. And I have with me up here some

16   sheets that explain how you can submit

17   additional comments.

18   The Department's decision and accompanying

19   information will be sent to the interested

20   person's list as well as to the applicant. And

21   to make sure that you are on the interested

22   person's list, if you have not signed in,

23   please do so before you leave this evening.

24   The Department's decision will be a final

25   agency determination and there will be no

1   further opportunity for administrative review.

2   Any person withstanding who'd either the

3   applicant or who participated in the public

4   participation process through the submission of

5   written or oral comments may petition for

6   judicial review in the Circuit Court in Charles

7   County. The petition for judicial review must

8   be filed within 30 days of publication of a

9   permanent decision.

10   We do appreciate your interests in this

11   project and thank you for attending the

12   hearing. The hearing is now adjourned.
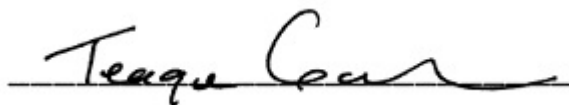
13   (Hearing adjourned at 7:55 p.m.)

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1   CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2

3   I, TEAGUE GIBSON, the officer before whom

4   the proceeding was taken, do hereby certify

5   that the testimony appearing in the foregoing

6   transcript was taken by me in stenotypy and

7   thereafter reduced to typewriting by me; that

8   said deposition is a true record of the

9   proceedings; that reading and signing was not

10   requested; that I am neither counsel for,

11   related to, nor employed by any of the parties

12   to the action in which this was taken; and,

13   further, that I am not a relative or employee

14   of any counsel or attorney employed by the

15   parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise

16   interested in the outcome of this action.

17

18   TEAGUE GIBSON, Notary Public in and for

19   the State of Maryland.

20

21   _Teague Coar_____

22

23

24   My commission expires: October 6, 2019

25

WORD INDEX

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