



Developing a Picture of Solar Development

Phase of Project:



Farm Location: Dryden, Tompkins County, New York

Operations:
Dairy and field crops (corn, beans, hay, triticale). He also raises pigs.

History:
The farm has been in Evan's family since 1917. Farming since he could say the word 'cow,' he now works with his son in the dairy operation and plans to keep the farm in his family.

Size of Project:
~30 acres of a 465-acre farm.

Type of Land:
Marginal land.

Length of Lease:
20-year lease.



Solar Leasing Experience:

In the spring of 2016 Evan lost his milk market, but on that same day he was approached by a solar developer. Negotiations took just a few months before he signed a contract, and today the panels are in operation.

Being that this was the first community solar project in Dryden, the town hadn't previously established any ordinances concerning solar so Evan had to work closely with the town.

He is also paid to maintain the array and another array down the road. This includes running sheep and turkeys underneath the panels to graze the vegetation, keeping the snow off the panels, and plowing the road that leads to the panels.

Advice:

- Keep the solar land separate from the rest of the farmland when paying taxes so that if taxes cannot be paid on the solar land and it is lost, the whole farm does not go with it.
- There are a lot of considerations when siting solar besides farmland classifications (i.e., natural resources and environmental considerations, such as wetlands).
- Encourage siting with minimal impact to the viewshed (utilize topography).

Stipulations in Contract:

Stipulations Evan negotiated for and received include a bond for the decommissioning process and hiring of local businesses for some aspects of the construction (such as fencing and gravel).

Stipulations Evan negotiated for and did not receive include where to site the project, where to plant trees as a visual barrier, and the freedom to plant what he wanted as a visual barrier.

Pros of Leasing Land for Solar:

- Lease payments
- Payments for maintenance
- Diversified income
- Utilizing unused land

Cons of Leasing Land for Solar:

- Utility poles installed create an eye sore
- Effect on neighbors
- Visual barrier shades crop fields

Town and Neighbor Response:

The town of Dryden was reluctant at first to approve the project. However, they eventually allowed it and Evan helped them write the town's solar laws. The project gets very few complaints, but one neighbor has expressed annoyance because the project required the installation of many more utility poles, which the neighbor sees as an eye sore.

Opinion towards Increasing Solar Presence:

Evan was uneasy at first about the increasing presence of solar in the area, but he has since warmed up to the idea now that he knows that the land can still be utilized underneath the panels, such as using it to graze sheep and turkeys.

Where Farmer Gained Information on Solar:

Evan educated himself on the process of leasing land for solar by himself, mostly using the internet without consulting any professionals. He even helped the town of Dryden write their solar laws.