

Public comment summary for proposed utility-scale lease for solar development on public lands in Otsego County, MI

Public comment period: January 7th – April 30, 2025

Date created: May 9, 2025

Summary

Public comments were collected through two established email addresses: DNR-OPL@michigan.gov and DNR-SolarProposal@michigan.gov. We received input from 206 individuals and organizations regarding the proposed lease for utility-scale solar development in Otsego County, MI. The comments reflected a range of perspectives, with the majority expressing opposition to utility-scale solar development on public lands. This input has been valuable in understanding public sentiment toward utility-scale solar development on public lands and will help inform the next steps in the decision-making process.

Methodology

To summarize public comments, each submission was reviewed and evaluated for expressed support or opposition to the proposal. Duplicate comments from the same individual were counted only once, which is why the total number of emails received exceeds the number of unique comments analyzed. Additionally, comments that did not pertain to this project were removed from the count to ensure relevance and accuracy. Each remaining comment was assigned a value of support or opposition based on its content. Following this initial categorization, comments were further reviewed to identify and group the main concerns raised by individuals or organizations.

Summary of opposing and supporting comments

Comments expressing **opposition** most frequently cited concerns relating to deforestation of public lands, loss of wildlife species and biodiversity, loss of recreation opportunities and access, Department's decision being financially motivated, and long- and short-term environmental impacts.

Comments expressing **support** most frequently cited that this proposal would advance clean and renewable energy goals, address the climate crisis, generate economic benefits for communities, ensure responsible siting practices on previously disturbed lands and help diversify Michigan's energy sources.

Recommendations and requested changes from public comments

- Create a publicly accessible and transparent policy and procedure for siting utility-scale solar energy on public lands that defines clear site selection criteria

- Enhance the public notification process to increase community awareness and engagement
- Consider siting in urban areas utilizing rooftops, parking lots, and other underutilized spaces
- Consider siting on vacant agricultural land as well as unused or contaminated lands

DNR management of utility-scale solar development and public lands

- Continued pause on new utility-scale solar projects on public lands
- Development of a decision-making framework for proposed leases on utility-scale solar development that includes public input and engagement
- No more than 4,000 acres of state-managed land will be leased for utility-scale solar development

Charts

Pie charts were used to display public comments on the proposed utility-scale solar development in Otsego County, providing a clear overview of overall public comment at a glance.

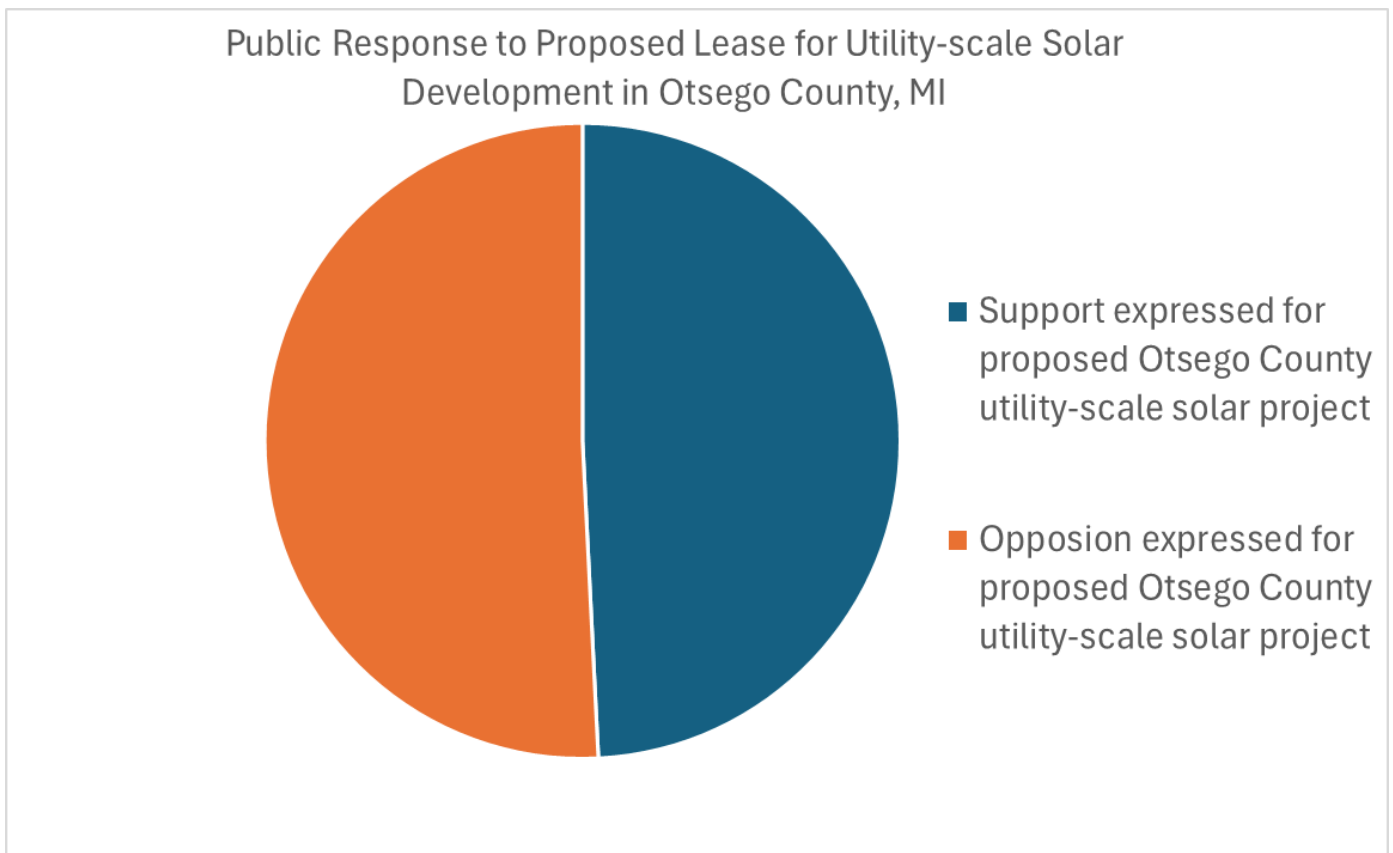


Figure 1 Distribution of public comments on proposed project: proportion of support versus opposition. Does not include comments where sentiment toward project was not expressed.

Public Response to Proposed Lease for Utility-scale Solar Development in Otsego County, MI

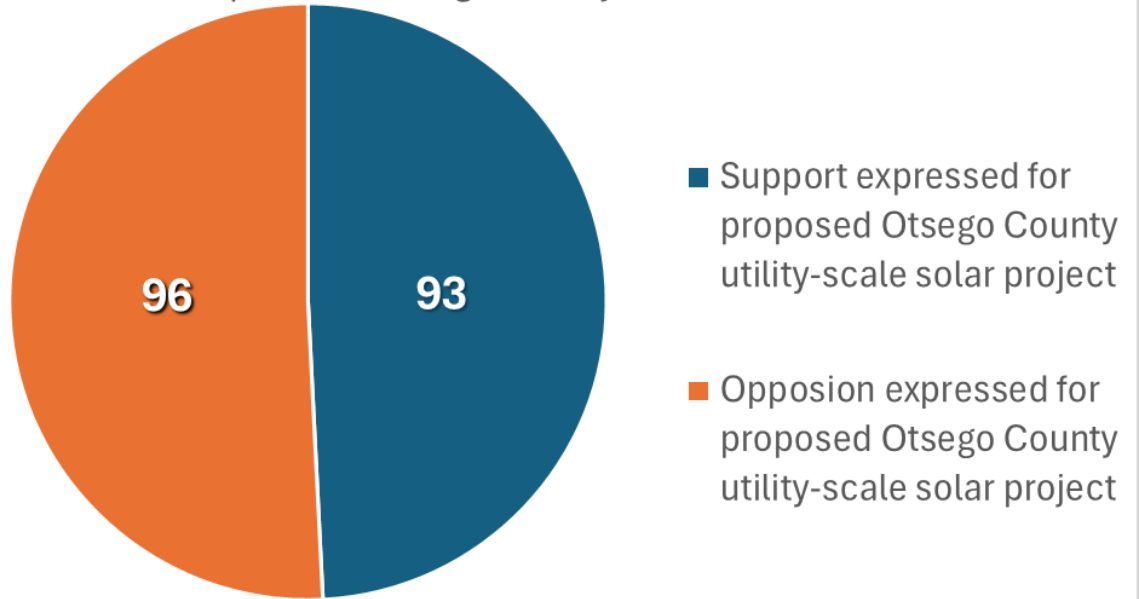


Figure 2 Distribution of public comments on proposed project: proportion of support versus opposition. Only comments that clearly expressed support or opposition are included in the count displayed.

Public Response to Proposed Lease for Utility-scale Solar Development in Otsego County, MI

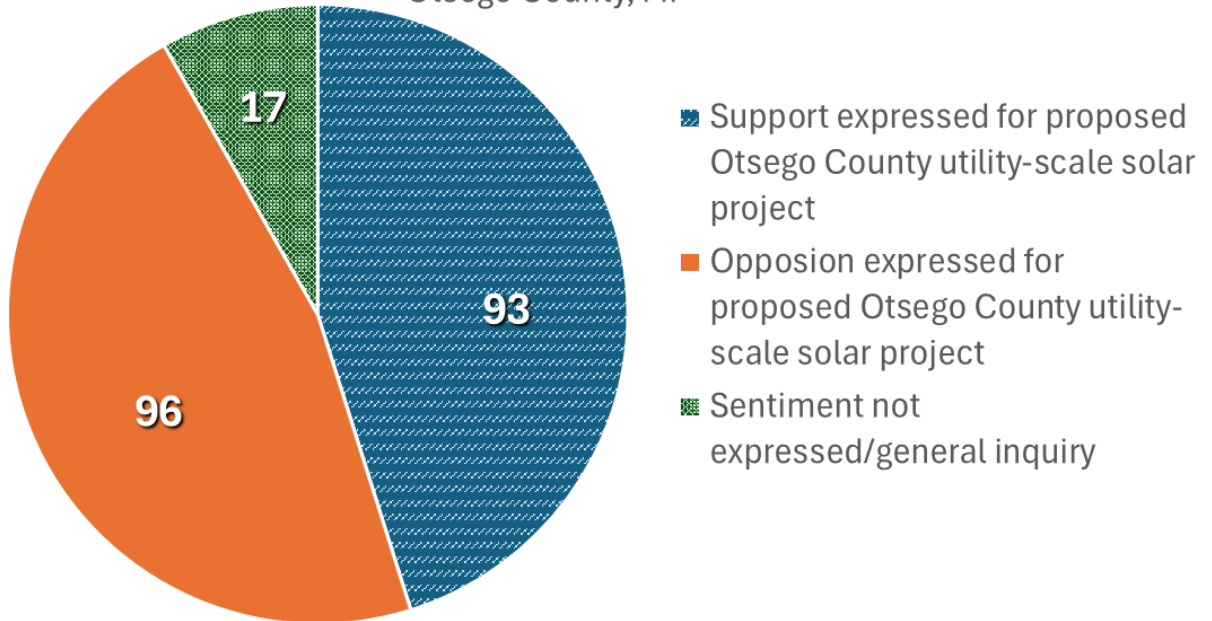


Figure 3 Distribution of public comments on proposed project: proportion of support, opposition, and sentiment not stated. Includes all 206 unique submissions.