



# POWER STRUGGLE

## Competition between agriculture and solar energy facilities is heating up

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

**B**ONANZA, Ore. — Nobody is against solar energy — at least, not in theory.

Solar power is often cast in a positive light until a specific site is chosen for a facility.

At that point, the proposed development can seem like a dark force to neighbors who fear the unsightly transformation of their familiar landscape.

“What’s it going to do to my property values when I’m right next to it?” asked Greg Thomas, whose farm abuts a proposed 2,733-acre solar project near Bonanza, Ore.

“All our property values are going to go in the toilet. Nobody wants to live next to a power plant,” answered Tonya Pinckney, another neighbor opposed to the facility planned by developer Hecate Energy.

### Local hostility

Local hostility to solar facilities isn’t just a knee-jerk “not in my backyard” sentiment in Oregon, a state known for its rigorous protections against converting farmland



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

**Dave Noble, left, and Greg Thomas look out onto a neighboring field where a 2,700-acre solar facility is proposed near Bonanza, Ore. Neighbors oppose the project because it will take irrigated farmland out of production.**

to other uses.

Opponents of solar facilities are often strongly motivated by concern for the agricultural economy, which can permanently suffer if irrigated acres such as those

within the Bonanza project are developed.

“Why do we have zoning laws?” Pinckney asked. “If it’s zoned for ag, how can they just take it out?”

About 600 acres of the project are irrigated and half the associated water rights can’t be transferred elsewhere due to a lack of available farmland, meaning that capacity could be lost forever, said Dave Noble, a local farmer.

“That is some top-notch farm ground for this area,” he said.

### Competing goals

Aside from preserving agriculture, Oregon strives to be a leader in promoting renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change.

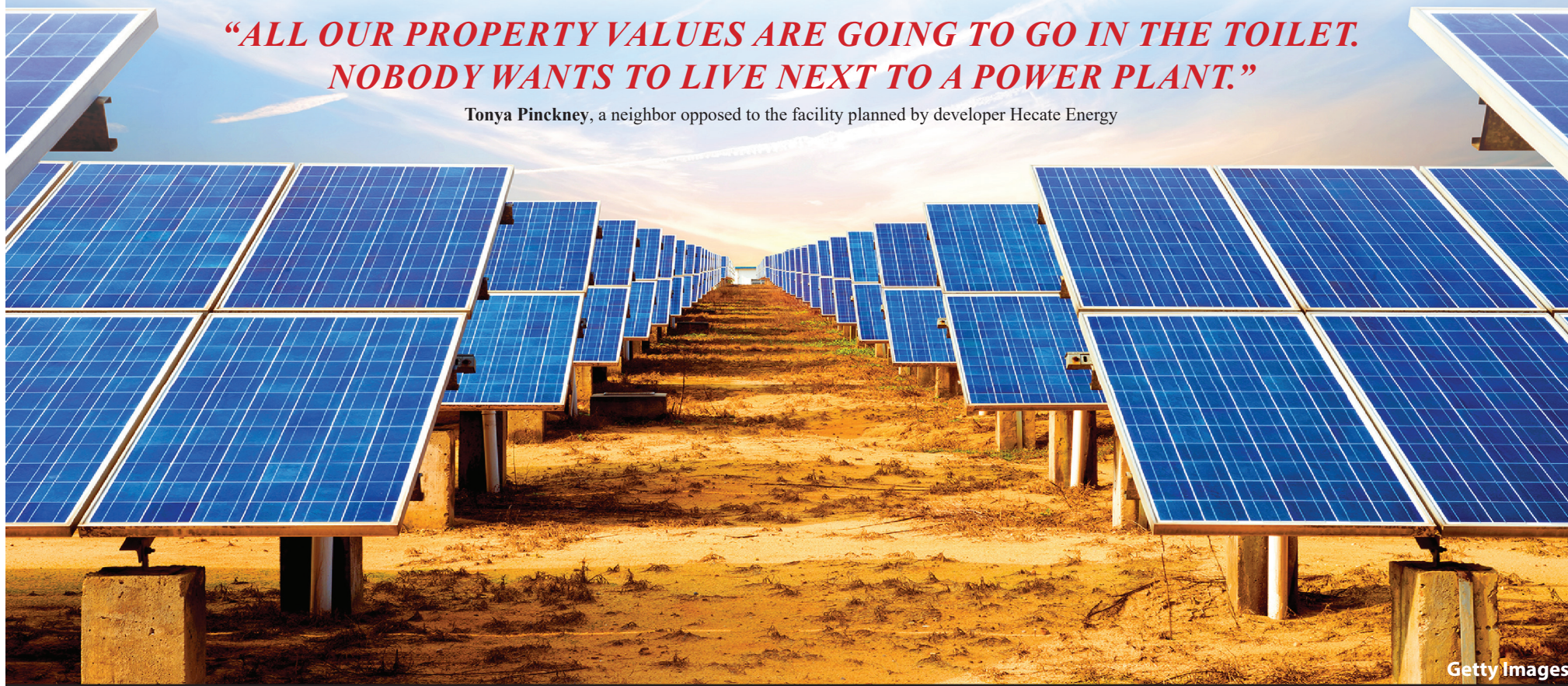
Those two objectives are bound to clash as solar energy production takes off in the state, propelled by economic forces as the technology becomes less expensive to manufacture and install.

While it’s long been boosted by tax credits, renew-

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**“ALL OUR PROPERTY VALUES ARE GOING TO GO IN THE TOILET. NOBODY WANTS TO LIVE NEXT TO A POWER PLANT.”**

Tonya Pinckney, a neighbor opposed to the facility planned by developer Hecate Energy



Getty Images

# Farm groups seek say in court tussle over wolves

By **DON JENKINS**  
Capital Press

Farmers and ranchers are seeking to defend the Trump administration’s decision to take wolves off the endangered species list, distrusting the new White House to stand by the policy.

The American Farm Bureau, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and other farm groups are waiting for a ruling on whether they can intervene in three suits filed in U.S. District Court for Northern California.

The suits seek to restore federal protection for wolves in California and the western two-thirds of Washington and Oregon, as well

as the Great Lakes region. Farm groups argue they have a big stake in the outcome and can’t rely on the Biden administration to protect their interests.

If the White House settles rather than fights, or loses and declines to appeal, farmers and ranchers will be hurt, according to the groups, calling themselves the Gray Wolf Agricultural Coalition.

“A change in presidential administration suggests that representation may not be adequate,” according to a brief submitted by the farm groups.

The three suits, filed by environmental groups, are on parallel tracks before Judge Jeffrey White in Oakland.

White already has granted intervenor status to the National Rifle Association and Safari Club International. Several other groups, calling themselves the Sportsmen Conservation Coalition, have also moved to intervene.

A hearing on motions to intervene is set for July 2. The American Sheep Industry Association, American Forest Resource Council and Public Lands Council joined the Farm Bureau and cattlemen’s association in the motion.

On his first day in office, President Biden ordered the Interior Department to reconsider a rule adopted in November that removed federal protection from wolves throughout the Lower 48.

“That review may alter the government’s position, and, at a minimum, makes clear the federal defendants cannot be relied upon to continue defending the delisting rule,” according to the farm groups.

The Biden administration has not announced any change in policy or asked the judge to delay proceedings while it reconsiders the rule.

Center for Biological Diversity attorney Collette Adkins said she wants the suits to move along to prevent states from authorizing wolf hunts. “We’re not inclined to stay the case while they (Biden

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WDFW

**Farm groups want a say in three lawsuits in U.S. District Court for Northern California that seek to restore federal protection for wolves in California and the western two-thirds of Washington and Oregon.**

# High-risk fire season arrives in some of West



Cal Fire

**A Cal Fire firefighter battles a wildfire. Much of the West faces above-average fire risk this season.**

By **BRAD CARLSON**  
Capital Press

Parts of the West face above-normal risk of large wildfires as June begins, the National Interagency Fire Center reported.

Warm, dry conditions mean the potential for significant fires — burning acreage above long-term medians — this month is expected to increase to above normal for portions of southern and central Oregon, and into southeastern Washington, NIFC’s National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for June through September said.

Brush, salt cedar and cedars in the Columbia Basin, the Northwest’s driest area, are especially fire-receptive.

“With the dry spring we had, especially across much of California, Washington and the Pacific Northwest, and into the Great Basin, it looks like more areas are going to have above-average fire potential this summer,” NIFC meteorologist Nic Nauslar told Capital Press.

The report said conditions that are warmer and drier than normal are likely for much of the High Plains and West through summer, continuing and exacerbating drought in those regions.

More than 87% of the West is in drought, which is categorized as extreme or exceptional in more than half the region, NIFC said.

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