Conserve Nassau

1417 Sadler Road, #187, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034

Proposed Amelia River Club/FPU Solar Farm: Questions & Concerns

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While those of us in Conserve Nassau are supportive of solar energy, we are strongly opposed to a solar farm in this particular location, where considerable tree canopy would be removed.

General context:

1. We need all of the mature trees we have on Amelia Island, and many more, for temperature moderation, stormwater processing, erosion control, protection from storm winds and storm surge and continuous habitat for our bird life and other wildlife. These benefits can only be achieved with forested areas, not occasional trees.
2. According to Gil Langley and the research of his team, the environment on Amelia Island constitutes the foundation of the Nassau County tourist industry, the largest source of revenue. We can't afford to destroy the basis of our economy.
3. As a barrier island, we are facing the hazards of sea level rise, global warming and increasing storm severity and storm surge. Experts have now (finally) learned that nature-based approaches to sustainability and resiliency are far superior to hardscape approaches. Yet we continue to destroy our protection and future.

This particular site:

1. Amelia Island and Nassau County in general have extensive wetlands. This includes areas around the airport, including the soccer fields, areas along the Parkway, north of Isle de Mai and Crane Island.
2. There has been a tremendous amount of development and tree removal in this part of the island, increasing flooding and high groundwater levels. This has been documented in Isle de Mai, the areas currently being developed on Bailey, the area around Simmons Road, Crane Island, and the soccer fields at the airport.
3. The development of Crane Island has destroyed much of the forest on the island and has probably elicited salt water intrusion in their dewatering practices for foundations.
4. The truth is that we see these challenges and changes, yet there is much we don't know because **no one is systematically studying** groundwater levels, flooding or saltwater intrusion. Furthermore, we have thus far seen no environmental consulting firms in this area with the depth and breadth of expertise to consistently identify and avert

permanent damage in such sensitive areas, nor have we seen builders or construction companies prepared to operate effectively in sensitive environments.
5. Opening up wind corridors near a small-craft airport could prove hazardous.

Initial Questions: As this process moves forward, we will ask more technical questions.

1. Any major solar facilities would need to be hurricane proof and salt proof. Is that feasible, or even possible? Is solar on this scale feasible on a barrier island, considering the hazards we face? What about the pollution when there is destruction?
2. Where will transmission lines and substations be located?
3. How can foundations be built that do not destroy the remaining trees and result in saltwater intrusion and erosion?
4. How will birds and other wildlife be protected?
5. What is the projection for the value of the solar farm at end of its economic life and the value of the forest at the same future time, including lifecycle maintenance costs for both? In the analysis, how is the value of the land counted? What is the cost to society after post-hurricane clean-up/restoration of the solar farm versus the stand of trees.
6. Is this larger-scale approach the most effective approach for Amelia Island? Would it be better to have smaller-scale installations to support neighborhoods or sections of the island so that the entire island doesn't lose power at one time?
7. What about the parking lots at the golf club, the hospital parking lots, grocery store and shopping center parking lots and other sites where people are desperate for shade?