



Memorandum

TO: Planning Commission

From: San Juan County Agricultural Resource Committee

Date: 6/18/24

Subject: Docket Requests 24-0006 and 24-0007

The Agricultural Resource Committee (ARC) sees well designed and executed agri-solar or agrivoltaic systems as a possible win/win for addressing climate change, increasing our energy resilience and supporting farmers by providing land access and compensation for maintaining agricultural activity. Agrivoltaic projects are generally defined as the simultaneous use of land for solar energy production and agriculture.

The recent conditional use permit application for the Bailer Hill agrivoltaic project has highlighted some of the weaknesses in San Juan County code and land use designations. The ARC supports both Docket Requests 24-0006 and 24-0007 as a way to remedy some problems in our current system.

Docket Request 24-0006

The ARC supports this docket request as written. In past memos the ARC has recommended allowing conditional use permitting of commercial power-generation facilities in Rural Farm Forest in order take the pressure off of resource lands as sites for power generation. Nationally there is a growing body of work regarding best management practices for agrivoltaic systems including site soil conservation, vegetation and crop management, animal integration, and decommissioning. The ARC would be happy to engage on this project and support DCD in creating guidelines to minimize adverse impacts on current and future agricultural use of resource lands.

Docket Request 24-0007

The creation of a new designation and development standards for “Agri-solar generation” would help to create a clear regulatory pathway for important agrivoltaic projects in San Juan County.

The proposed definition ““Agrisolar generation” means equipment or machinery that produces fossil-free electricity from solar renewable energy sources co-located with Rural Designation and Resource Lands used for agriculture and can include energy storage” could be simplified. There is no need to include the land use designations in the definition since that will be reflected in the land use table. It is also unclear in the proposed definition if the co-location is with the land use designation or the agricultural activity.

We suggest simplifying the definition and clarifying that what is being “co-located” is power generation and agricultural activity. Proposed new definition: “Agrisolar generation” means the simultaneous use of land for solar photovoltaic power generation and storage and agricultural production of crops, livestock, and livestock products.

Again, the ARC would be happy to support DCD in reviewing the best available science and relevant land use implications for ‘agri-solar’ and ‘agri-voltaic’.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Faith Van De Putte', with a stylized, cursive style.

Faith Van De Putte, ARC Coordinator