

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 30, 2025**



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## **NYS ISSUES SECOND INCOMPLETE FOR SHEPHERD’S RUN APPLICATION; IGNORES FIRE, SMOKE RISKS TO TACONIC SCHOOLS**

The New York State Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES), the permitting agency for industrial-scale solar energy facilities, has issued a second notice to Hecate that its application to build a 42 MW Shepherd’s Run solar project in Copake, NY is still Incomplete. In its June 27, 2025 Notice to Hecate, ORES noted eleven Deficiencies that must be remedied.

Prominently missing from the Notice is any mention of fire and smoke risks for the Taconic Hills Central Schools, attended by 1400 students from kindergarten through high school.

### **ORES Turns Blind Eye to Children, Deaf Ear to Community**

“It is unconscionable that ORES, a state agency, is ignoring the smoke and fire risks to the adjacent Taconic Hills Central Schools and nearby residences from this proposed 215-acre solar facility. The Schools will be just a few hundred yards from a large field of panels. There have been brush and equipment fires at similar facilities, most recently in Rensselaer County last fall. Yet despite urging from the community, and contrary to its own rules, ORES has not demanded an evacuation plan,” states Sara Traberman of Sensible Solar for Rural New York (SSRNY), a citizen group opposed to the project. “The smoke and fire hazard is of grave concern given the site’s proximity to more than a thousand children,” Traberman states.

William Murphy, a retired Battalion Chief with the FDNY, a veteran of 9-11, and Copake homeowner, believes the safety of the children at the Schools as well as of first responders from the Copake and Craryville volunteer fire departments are seriously at risk. “Hecate suggests that a brush fire should just be allowed to burn itself out. This puts kids and firefighters in jeopardy. Exposure to smoke can cause cancer and damage lungs for a lifetime, and fire can spread. It is reckless to make any decision that puts solar panels so near the Schools,” Murphy states.

### **Wetlands Hung Out To Dry**

The proposed Shepherd’s Run project is located within the Taghkanic Creek Watershed, which provides the drinking water to the City of Hudson. “The extensive streams and wetlands at the site should get at least the same protections as all other water bodies in the State, if not more. Every other business and homeowner in NYS must abide by new Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) wetland regulations. Not so Hecate, however,” Traberman states. “Their application reveals panels located in floodplains, setback violations, and an access road to be built over a wetland. This is the kind of environmental degradation the 2025 DEC wetland regulations were designed to prevent. The road should be prohibited,” Traberman states.

### **Only the Beginning**

SSRNY cites a long list of additional deficiencies that should be addressed before any permit for Shepherd’s Run is drafted, including problems with construction stormwater runoff, clearcutting of 35 acres of trees, an out-of-date assessment of endangered species, disturbances to historic buildings, and taking of prime farmland. “The current list of eleven Deficiencies in the ORES Incomplete Notice is only the beginning of what is deficient in this project,” says Traberman. She adds, “Based on what we know so far, this project is wrong for Copake, wrong for Columbia County and wrong for New York State. The health risks and environmental damage involved in this project are simply not justified by the meager amount of renewable energy this project is expected to produce. ORES should deny the permit.”

For more information visit: <https://sensiblesolarny.org/>

