

SOLAR PROJECTS CAN'T SAVE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES?

WADING RIVER, New York: A green energy project has some environmentalists seeing red. Solar energy ordinarily wins praise from groups that want to cut greenhouse gases, but a proposed solar project at a defunct Long Island nuclear power plant has stirred outrage because it requires demolishing 350 acres of woodlands. "Choosing solar over forests anywhere in the world is just plain stupid," said Dick Amper, of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society. "Solar is very important to fight global warming and beyond, but I'm afraid we're making false choices when you destroy portions of nature and the environment to accomplish that end."

Similar projects are happening elsewhere. A court fight is brewing over a plan by New Jersey's Six Flags Great Adventure amusement park to cut down nearly 15,000 trees to make way for a solar farm. In Connecticut, state officials recently approved a plan to raze 134 acres of trees in the town of Sprague, near Norwich, for a solar energy project. Alex Hobson, a spokeswoman for a Solar Energy industry group in Washington, DC, declined to comment on the Long Island proposal, but said the industry "is committed to responsible use of the land on which we operate and we go to great lengths to protect biodiversity and ecologically fragile lands."

Under the proposal, a company called LI Solar Generation, LLC, a joint venture between NextEra Energy Resources and National Grid, would construct the facility on the grounds of the defunct Shoreham nuclear power plant. The plant was completed in 1984 for \$6 billion but never opened because of community opposition over potential safety concerns. The solar project backers are hoping to plug into existing electric energy infrastructure on the Shoreham property, with

plans for up to 72 megawatts of solar energy, providing power for more than 13,000 homes. A part of the plan mentions replanting trees elsewhere to offset the cutting of the forest but a spokesman for the company did not have details.

Walter Thomas, who teaches a course on solar energy at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, questioned why it was necessary to eliminate any trees at all. "I would think Long Island would have giant rooftops and parking lots in shopping malls that could be used for large solar projects if that's what's needed," Thomas said. "There's so much acreage available for that stuff." Sid Bail, president of the Wading River Civic Association, who lives about a half mile from the Shoreham site along the Long Island Sound, isn't buying it. "I favor renewable energy, but in this case it's a very bad trade-off," he said. The proposal submitted last month still requires extensive regulatory review.

"We are prepared to work closely with all public officials and the local community to come up with the best solution to have renewable solar energy at Shoreham, and preserve as much of the property as possible," Ross Groffman, executive director of NextEra Energy Resources and LI Solar Generation said in a statement. Neal Lewis, executive director of the Sustainability Institute at Molloy College, an environmental advocacy group on Long Island that supports the Shoreham project, said it is always preferable to build solar projects in open spaces that don't require the elimination of large numbers of trees. But he notes that "of all the potential options, there is nothing less impactful on the environment than putting in a solar farm." "That's the real world we live in and they have a right to develop it."—AP



NEW YORK: In this photo, Grete Bader, right, a recent masters graduate of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, walks with Professor Donald Leopold on sandy waste left over from iron mining in Star Lake, New York. — AP photos

MILLIONS OF ORCHIDS GROW ON FORMER MINE SITE IN UPSTATE NY

IT'S A TESTAMENT TO NATURE'S ABILITY TO HEAL ITSELF

STAR LAKE, New York: Millions of orchids are now growing in a hundred-acre wetland in the Adirondack Park that developed on waste from a vast open-pit iron mine, a transformation scientists say is most impressive because it happened naturally. It's a testament to nature's ability to heal itself, said Grete Bader, a graduate student who recently wrote her master's thesis about the plant life at the former Benson Mines, about 35 miles from the Canadian border.

The wetland, which remains privately owned and off limits to the public, formed on part of thousands of acres of coarse sand left over when granite ore was crushed to extract iron from 1900 until 1978. That bare sand eventually gave way to moss, lichen, grasses, sedges and trees, including willows, poplars and tamaracks. Orchids arrived as dust-like seeds from surrounding areas. The wetland is now home to six species of bog orchids, including millions of rose pogonias and grass pinks.

Olive been involved in orchid-rich habitats all over the country for 40 years, and I've never seen anything like this, said Donald Leopold, a professor at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Leopold first explored the site 30 years ago, but the staggering number of orchids wasn't quantified until recently when his graduate student, Bader, tallied them up in her thesis. Several factors contribute to the thriving plant community at the site, Bader said, including a variety of fungi that colonize a plants root system and enhance its ability to absorb nutrients.

Orchids require sun

What's really cool to me as a plant ecologist is how this site went from bare mine tailings to a diverse wetland plant community over the past 60 years on its own, without any formal restoration initiative, Bader said during a recent visit to the site. Bader and Leopold suggest that the site would be a worthy addition to the Adirondack Forest Preserve if the owner was interested in selling it to the state.

But the landowners lawyer says there are no plans to sell the land or allow public access. Benson Mines wasn't even aware of the orchids until the researchers made them public, said attorney Bernard Melewski. He said the orchid site is a small part of about 2,000 acres of sand

and crushed stone mining waste that the company hopes to ship to markets when a nearby railroad spur is renovated.

Even if the site remains untouched by development, the orchids may be a fleeting phenomenon as the natural forces that brought them here continue to reshape the landscape.

Already, an aggressive non-native reed called phragmites is choking out other plants in large swaths of the wetland. The orchids here today require full sun, Bader said. Between invasive plants and natural succession to a closed canopy tamarack-black spruce bog, we are going to see them decline.—AP



NEW YORK: In this photo, Grete Bader, a recent masters graduate of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, poses among orchid populations that grow from waste left from a former iron mine in Star Lake, New York.

US MAN SUFFERS 'VICIOUS' CROC ATTACK AT COSTA RICA BEACH

MEXICO CITY: An American surfer was in serious but stable condition after he was attacked by a large crocodile at a popular tourist beach in Costa Rica on Friday, according to an emergency responder who credited the man's friend for fighting off the reptile with his bare hands. Pat McNulty, who works as a consultant and is a certified trained lifeguard in Tamarindo, a northwestern town favored by surfers and eco-tourists, said the man was crossing a river with the friend when the crocodile struck.

"It was a vicious attack, and he was bitten several times in the leg as well as the head," McNulty told The Associated Press by phone from Costa Rica. "They were able to get him free, swim him to safety and then trained lifeguards responded ... and we administered first aid and called an ambulance." McNulty said he accompanied the victim, who remained lucid after the attack, to Liberia, the provincial capital, where he underwent surgery.

He declined to give specifics about the man's injuries other than to say he suffered lower leg trauma and his condition was serious but stable. "His friend saved his life ... and then we the lifeguards helped keep him alive," McNulty said. "It was a very traumatic scene, and all individuals attending him did a tremendous job." Costa Rican media reported that the

victim suffered partial amputation of his right ankle and most of his calf muscle was stripped.

McNulty said he was familiar with the man before the attack because Tamarindo is a small town where everyone knows everyone else. He declined to identify him publicly by name but described him as a surfer from Colorado who maintains a residence in the village. Family members were traveling to be with him, McNulty added. The US Embassy in Costa Rica said in a statement that it was aware of the case and that consular officers help US citizens when they are injured overseas, but declined to comment further citing privacy considerations.

Earlier, Costa Rican press reports had said the man was from Arizona. Community, wildlife and tourism officials met after Friday's attack to consider strategies for relocating crocodiles and making sure there's proper signage to keep people safe. McNulty said a few months ago there was a "minor incident" in which a smaller croc bit a person. "We live in a country where there's large crocodiles, and people take for granted that when you go into a river that you're safe," the lifeguard said. "But the fact of the matter is that you need to be aware of your environment. ... We're in their world."—AP

MICHIGAN ZOO SHUTS DOWN EXHIBIT AFTER SHARK DEATHS

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan: An outdoor lagoon at a western Michigan zoo is being shut down following the deaths of 21 stingrays and sharks. MLive.com reports Friday that the exhibit at John Ball Zoo in Grand Rapids has been dismantled. Eighteen cownose stingrays and three spotted bamboo sharks were found dead July 8 after a mechanical malfunction shut off one of two pumps to the lagoon.

Low oxygen levels were found in water samples. Zoo Chief Executive Peter D'Arienzo says no new stingray exhibit will be built until officials determine that a state-of-the-art, weather protected facility that can assure the animals' safety can be built. More than 50 stingrays died last summer after oxygen levels in their tank dropped too low at an exhibit at the Brookfield Zoo in suburban Chicago.—AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368