White Mountain Association of REALTORS®
3320 Kay Rd., Lakeside, AZ 85929

June 2026

Dear WMAR Members,

Since the beginning of the year, the Board and staff of the White Mountain Association of REALTORS® have been conducting an extensive review of the proposed Lava Run and Black Ridge wind and solar projects based on member feedback and the questions clients have begun to pose. This letter explains why we have formally opposed these projects and what that opposition means for you and our communities.

Our opposition is not based on ideology or blanket opposition to renewable energy. Rather, it is grounded in research that shows that these specific projects – as sited – pose unacceptable economic, environmental, safety, and property-rights costs to our region.

What Our Research Found

Property Value Impacts

Peer-reviewed appraisal studies, federal research, and market data from Texas, the Upper Midwest, and the Mountain West consistently document measurable declines in residential property values within view of large wind installations, with the most pronounced impacts within two miles of turbines.

In a region where our real estate market depends on viewshed, outdoor recreation, retirement appeal, and second-home demand, loss of mountain and forest vistas directly affects assessed value, time-on-market, and lender appetite. Our members are already fielding questions from buyers discovering proposed turbine locations during their due diligence.

Wildfire Risk

The White Mountains rank among the most fire-prone landscapes in the Southwest. The Rodeo-Chediski Fire (2002) and Wallow Fire (2011) permanently altered insurance, lending, and development realities here. Industrial wind and solar projects bring high-voltage transmission corridors, substations, inverters, and battery storage systems into forested fuel beds. Utility infrastructure has been documented as a leading cause of catastrophic wildfire ignition across the West. Additional energized infrastructure layered across this landscape materially increases ignition risk to homes, ranches, watersheds, and the National Forest lands surrounding our communities.

Wildlife and Dark-Sky Impacts

The White Mountains support Rocky Mountain elk, Merriam turkey, bald and golden eagles, Mexican gray wolves, Mexican spotted owls, sensitive raptors, and seasonal bat populations. Proposed wind facilities overlap documented raptor movement corridors and bat habitat; turbine collision is well-documented in the scientific literature. Industrial solar arrays require wholesale conversion of grassland and piñon-juniper habitat supporting pronghorn, mule deer, and ground-nesting birds. The region's dark-sky character is also a significant draw for visitors and homebuyers; lit substations, aviation lights, and security lighting at industrial-scale facilities would permanently alter that character.

Water Demands

Construction-phase water uses for dust control, soil compaction, and panel/turbine assembly; and ongoing operational water use for panel washing will draw on already-stressed groundwater in the Little Colorado River watershed. We have not seen credible, basin-specific hydrologic analyses from the project proponents. Our members, who regularly advise rural buyers on well capacity and water adequacy, do not believe cumulative water impacts have been honestly modeled.

Permanent Land Conversion and Limited Local Economic Return

These projects take working ranchland out of multi-generational productive use for 30–40 years or longer. Local construction jobs are real but short-lived; permanent operations jobs are modest; and revenue and tax benefits flow primarily to out-of-state developers and financiers. Property tax abatements, transferable credits, and renewable-energy-zone treatment further reduce what tax benefits local jurisdictions actually receive. The central equity problem remains: rural Arizona absorbs land-use, viewshed, wildfire, and infrastructure impacts while urban and out-of-state ratepayers receive electricity and developers capture tax benefits.

Decommissioning Risk

Our review of comparable projects across the West shows a consistent pattern: decommissioning bonds set at the front end are routinely insufficient to cover actual removal, foundation extraction, blade disposal, and site reclamation 25-40 years later, especially when the original developer is no longer the operating entity. The risk of orphaned infrastructure left on private and state trust lands is not theoretical. Under current bonding frameworks, it is a near-certainty and becomes a permanent encumbrance on property and market value for every parcel in sight of it.

Local Control and Public Engagement

Many current projects are advanced under siting and certification processes that preempt or substantially constrain county and municipal authority to set meaningful setbacks, height limits, lighting standards, sound limits, and decommissioning bonds. Public meetings have been scheduled with minimal notice, project footprints have shifted materially between sessions, and adjacent landowners often learn of proposed turbine locations only after lease negotiations with neighbors are well advanced. This process falls short of what Arizona communities should expect for decisions that will reshape our region for decades.

What WMAR Is Doing

The WMAR Board has formally requested that state and elected officials:

- Oppose the Lava Run and Black Ridge projects as currently sited, pending independent environmental, hydrologic, wildfire, and economic review;
- Restore and strengthen local land-use authority through measures that preserve county and municipal ability to establish enforceable setbacks, height and lighting standards, sound limits, and adequate decommissioning bonds;
- Require third-party-verified decommissioning bonds indexed to actual removal and reclamation costs, reviewed every five years, and held by the county without reassignment to successor developers;
- Mandate transparent, in-person public engagement in each affected community with 60 days' notice, evening hearings, and direct property-owner notification within a defined radius of any proposed turbine, array, or transmission corridor; and
- At the federal level, recalibrate tax credit, transferability, and offtake structures that incentivize siting in rural communities that do not consume the resulting electricity.

What These Studies Can't Measure

Prior research on renewable energy has looked at smaller projects across the U.S. to measure their impacts on real estate markets. The Lava Run and Black Ridge projects, as sited, will be the largest solar and wind installations ever built. With wind turbines over 700ft high, they will be viewable from 25-45 miles away and affect communities across the region.

What We've Heard to Date

To date, we've heard from members who support and oppose our position to these projects. It is unclear whether those who support them have a vested interest in their approval but the overwhelming consensus from our members and our member survey earlier this year was that more than 70% of WMAR members oppose these projects.

What This Means for You

As our member, you have an opportunity and responsibility to make your voice heard. Whether you serve as a property advisor, represent buyers and sellers, advise rural landowners on water and land value, or simply live and work in communities that these projects will affect, your perspective matters.

Decisions made over the next 18–24 months will shape the character, economy, and property values of the White Mountain region for the next 50 years.

We encourage you to:

- Contact county supervisors, municipal councils, and state legislators with your concerns;
- Share your personal experience with clients, neighbors, or colleagues about property value concerns, fire risk, or other impacts;

- Attend public meetings and ask tough questions; and
- Share your concerns through WMAR’s ongoing survey portal CLICK HERE.

WMAR was founded on the principle that real estate professionals serve not only as advisors to individual clients but as stewards of the communities we call home. We believe this opposition stands up to scrutiny because it is evidence-based, community-centered, and rooted in concerns any property advisor would share. We are not opposed to renewable energy or economic development. We are opposed to a siting model that asks rural Arizona to bear all the costs while out-of-state interests capture all the benefits.

The WMAR Board remains available to discuss these findings and answer questions. Thank you for your continued membership and for standing with your communities and your profession.

Respectfully,

The White Mountain Association of REALTORS® Board of Directors