Debunking Common Misinformation About Renewable Energy Projects

Much of the resistance to renewable energy projects in particular stems from persistent misconceptions and disinformation about their impacts—on land, health, property values, and more. These myths can derail well-planned projects and undermine support in communities that stand to benefit. Here are some commonly held myths and what the evidence actually shows.

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> *This factsheet draws from Evergreen Action and the Private Property Rights Institute's joint report, Protecting Property Rights, Powering Rural Economies: Firsthand Perspectives on Energy Siting from Landowners and Local Officials, highlighting the voices of Pennsylvania farmers and local leaders navigating the energy infrastructure siting issue.*

Environmental Impact

Modern photovoltaic (PV) panels, or **solar panels, are designed to be durable and safe** under normal operating conditions. They are typically encapsulated in protective materials and sealed to prevent leakage.

Opponents of clean energy often misrepresent science to suggest that solar panels contaminate soil or groundwater.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), **the risk of hazardous material release from panels is very low** when systems are properly installed and maintained.

Land Restoration

Energy leases are temporary and typically include binding decommissioning clauses, either at the state, county, or local level, requiring equipment removal and land restoration at the end of the lease.

Adversaries incorrectly state that solar and wind projects permanently alter or damage the land.

In addition to decommissioning clauses, many states and localities require financial assurances—such as bonds or escrow accounts—to ensure decommissioning is completed and **land can return to other productive use**. While policies vary, these provisions are increasingly becoming standard.

Freedom of Choice

Landowners who choose to participate in energy development do so voluntarily, negotiating mutually beneficial agreements with developers with site-specific terms that provide **flexibility and income**.

Contrary to claims that landowners are forced into development agreements, participation is entirely by choice.

Land Use

Renewable energy projects are often sited on marginal, low-yield, or previously disturbed land.

The opposition falsely asserts that solar eliminates productive farmland, but in reality, renewable energy can coexist with agriculture.

Dual-use approaches such as grazing or agrivoltaics help preserve agricultural productivity while allowing for energy generation.

Understanding these realities is critical as debates over land use intensify. Policy decisions about siting will determine whether rural landowners can continue making voluntary choices about their land, or whether restrictive rules will limit those opportunities.