



COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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September xx, 2021

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
Ten Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

PETITION NO. 1463 – Greenskies Clean Energy, LLC petition for a declaratory ruling for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 1.0-megawatt (MW) AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at a Mulnite Farms, Inc. parcel off Wapping Road, and a 4.0 MW AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility to be located at a Mulnite Farms, Inc. parcel off Miller Road, East Windsor, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Ms. Bachman:

The Council on Environmental Quality (“the Council”) supports the development of clean, renewable energy technologies on appropriate sites in Connecticut. The Council offers the following comments regarding Petition 1463.

1. Prime Farmland Soils

The Petitioner states that the proposed sites are currently used for the cultivation of shade tobacco. If the proposed project is approved, the Petitioner proposes to use a portion of the proposed site for vegetable production (Wapping Road Site), sheep grazing and pollinator habitat. The Petitioner also states that it does “not expect there to be a reduction in acreage used for agricultural uses”. The Council recommends that the Petitioner provide more details regarding the proposed use of sheep for grazing (Solar Grazing Plan), including but not limited to the projected availability of sheep for such purposes. Further, the Council recommends that the Petitioner clarify the statement regarding no reduction in acreage used for agricultural purposes since it is proposed that vegetables would only be grown within the rows of the proposed solar panels on the Wapping Road site.

The Council recommends that the proposed agricultural co-uses become conditions of approval, should the project be approved. Additionally, the Council recommends that no prime farmland soils be removed from the proposed sites and that best practices be employed during construction that might allow for a future restoration of those soils to productive agricultural use. These practices include minimizing grading, trenching and compaction of prime farmland soils.

2. Wildlife

The Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identifies that the Northern Long-eared Bat and ten migratory birds may be present in the vicinity of the proposed project.¹ Consequently, the Council recommends that the Petitioner survey the proposed sites to assess the presence of any migratory bird species, identified by the USFWS, that might be present. If found, the Council recommends that the Applicant consult with the NDDB and or the USFWS to develop and implement plans to eliminate or mitigate any potential adverse impacts to these migratory bird species. In addition, the Council recommends providing space at the bottom of the proposed perimeter fence to allow for the migration of small wildlife, if consistent with safety requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Hearn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Peter Hearn,
Executive Director

¹ The Petitioner surveyed for the wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), which was observed on May 26 and June 8, 2020. The Council notes that the bobolink, one of the ten identified migratory birds that might be present, prefers a habitat consisting of grassland.