



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

December 27, 2017

Ms. Susanne Shrader

Re: Response to Comment on Potential Transfer of a Non-exclusive Easement

Dear Ms. Shrader,

Thank you for your comment you submitted regarding the potential transfer of a non-exclusive easement to the Town of Pomfret from the State of Connecticut, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP"). Your comment focused on a possible sale of State property that is currently an undeveloped stretch of the Air Line Trail State Park, the potential disturbance to vegetation and wetlands, and questioned who would benefit from the transaction.

The Office of Policy and Management has reviewed this proposal with DEEP and can ensure that DEEP is not proposing to sell public recreation and conservation land. This potential project proposes to grant a non-exclusive easement, which will ensure that the property remains in State ownership and will allow the continued recreational use of the trail by the public, to the Town of Pomfret. In exchange, the Town of Pomfret is providing the following services to the benefit of the State of Connecticut and future trail users:

- facilitating enhanced recreational development of the trail through trail grading;
- developing engineering plans and bidding packages for seven trail/road crossings (including two bridges) to Connecticut Department of Transportation specifications; and
- performing on-going maintenance of the non-exclusive easement area.

The results of this project will be beneficial for the numerous people who use this property now and into the future, not only the users of the sewer line alone. While there is proposed vegetation clearing of 25-foot wide (in wetlands, a smaller 15-foot swath) along the length of the subject property, such clearing is proposed mostly for overhanging vegetation and for few, if any, large mature trees or shrubs. Some areas may experience no clearing at all, depending on the degree of vegetative overhang. Where possible, DEEP has requested that new trees be planted to obscure the limited equipment that will be above grade. DEEP has also requested that a State Forester or Parks Supervisor is on site to ensure only necessary clearing occurs.

With regard to wetlands impacts, very little wetlands disturbance may be expected as a result of the proposed sewer line installation. About one acre of wetlands may be impacted and the Town of

Pomfret is currently undergoing obtaining the required State inland wetlands permit for this project. Recreational trail development, which is planned to follow this work, would have had a similar impact.

According to DEEP, as it currently exists, the trail here is undeveloped and mostly grass. Upon completion of the sewer installation, the property will be restored and improved for use by the state's residents as a multiple-user recreational trail. The property will be graded to a 14-foot wide flat base whereon further trail-surface enhancements can occur. Even before further surfacing work is completed, the wider, graded surface will make the trail more usable by walkers, runners, bicyclers, and horse-back riders. Based upon these factors, DEEP believes this project will facilitate making the highest use of state resources by further opening and enhancing this section of the trail to the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan Weisselberg", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop in the middle.

Susan Weisselberg
Deputy Secretary