



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

February 23, 2022

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William Warzecha

Peter Hearn
Executive Director

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

PETITION NO. 1487 – CT Solar Portfolio I, LLC petition for a declaratory ruling for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 1.97 megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 254 Putnam Road, Pomfret, Connecticut.

Dear Ms. Bachman:

The Council on Environmental Quality (“Council”) supports the development of clean, renewable energy technologies on appropriate sites in Connecticut. The Council offers the following comments regarding Petition 1487.

1. Wildlife

The Petitioner states that the direct impact of the proposed project would be the loss of approximately 12.5 acres of grassland bird habitat where two State-listed species have been documented (bobolink and savannah sparrow). The Council supports the proposed “Conservation Recommendations” identified in Appendix G, Environmental Assessment, State-listed Bird Species Assessment, which include undertaking construction outside of the sensitive breeding season (April 1 through August 30). However, if the proposed construction is scheduled during the active peak breeding season for rare grassland bird species (May 20 to August 20), grassland birds should be deterred from nesting within the Project limits. The Petitioner has also proposed “Site Management Protection Measures” for mowing the grasslands within and adjacent to the proposed project following construction.

The Petitioner states that there is the potential for the wood turtle and the spotted turtle to be present on or adjacent to the proposed site and recommends that protection measures be employed during construction. The Council again supports the Petitioner’s efforts to reduce impacts to turtles during the construction of the proposed solar facility by utilizing isolation measures, conducting contractor education, and reporting as identified in Appendix G, Environmental Assessment, Herpetological Habitat Assessment. Therefore, the Council recommends that the proposed protective measures, identified above for both grassland birds and the two species of turtles, be a condition of approval.

2. Prime Farmland Soils

The Petitioner states that the proposed site is currently used to produce hay and that approximately seven acres of the proposed 13-acre site consists of prime farmland soils. The Council recommends that best practices be employed during construction that might allow for a future restoration of those soils to more productive agricultural use. These practices include minimizing grading, trenching, and compaction of prime farmland soils.

3. Groundwater

The Petitioner states that the groundwater underlying the proposed site is designated as “GA” and is not within an aquifer protection area. The Council supports the Petitioners’ proposed measures to eliminate or minimize the potential spill of petroleum products and other chemicals as identified on Sheet EN-1 and recommends that all the measures identified in the Petroleum Materials Storage and Spill Prevention notes be a condition of approval.

The Council notes that the comments above address only certain elements of the materials provided by the Petitioner at the time of the filing. Additional information can become evident through comments offered by other parties and during the Siting Council’s administrative hearing process. The absence of comment(s) by this Council about any Petition or Application, or any aspects thereof, may not be interpreted as an endorsement of a proposed project, or its components or that this Council might not have comments or concerns on more specific issues raised during the hearing process.

Thank you for your consideration of the Council’s comments.

Sincerely,

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

Peter Hearn
Executive Director