



## STATE OF CONNECTICUT

# COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

### VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

November 16, 2023

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director  
Connecticut Siting Council  
Ten Franklin Square  
New Britain, CT 06051  
[Melanie.Bachman@ct.gov](mailto:Melanie.Bachman@ct.gov)

PETITION NO. 1597 – Greenskies Clean Energy LLC petition for a declaratory ruling for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 3.74-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at Parcel No. 017-150-066, Spencer Hill Road, Winchester, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Attorney Bachman,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) offers the following comments regarding Petition 1597.

#### 1. Farmland Soils

The Petitioner notes that the proposed project area is currently undeveloped farmland and Figure 9 “Farmland Soils Map” indicates that the majority of the proposed project area is underlain by prime farmland soils and the remainder is statewide important farmland soils. The Council wants to emphasize the importance of agricultural land and specifically prime farmland soils in Connecticut. Consequently, the Council recommends that the Petitioner 1) minimize the use of prime farmland soils however possible for this particular project, and 2) employ best practices during construction and operation that might allow for the future restoration of farmland soils to a more productive agricultural state by retaining the topsoil and minimizing grading, trenching, and compaction of farmland soils. The Council also recommends that the Petitioner consider utilizing updated methods and techniques for minimizing erosion and sedimentation based on the best currently available technology and strategies, as identified in the revised Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control and the Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual, which has an effective date of March 30, 2024.

#### 2. Visual Impact

The Petitioner’s Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix J) indicates that the proposed facility would be visible to residents located at 140, 142 and 146 Spenser Hill Road. The Council recommends that the Petitioner assess measures to minimize the potential visual impact of the proposed project on the nearby residents, including but not limited to planting evergreens that are a native, deer-resistant species that would be of sufficient size to effectively screen the proposed facility.

#### 3. Wildlife

The Petitioner notes that a Final Determination dated March 7, 2023, was provided by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) ezFile Portal

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Paul Aresta  
*Executive Director*

which stated that no known state-listed species are likely to exist within the Project Area. The Council notes that the United State Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) system identified the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*), a federally listed “Endangered” species, as a species that may potentially occur in the project area. Furthermore, the DEEP map titled “Connecticut Northern Long-eared bat Observations by Town”, dated July 24, 2023<sup>1</sup>, indicates that the Town of Winchester is designated as “Winter Occurrence” for NLEB. The Council recommends that the Petitioner consult with the DEEP Wildlife Division to eliminate or mitigate any potential adverse impacts to NLEB.

The Council’s 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 black ink that reads "Paul Aresta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul Aresta  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/NDDB/NoLongEaredBat-Map.pdf>