



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

December 14, 2023

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
Ten Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051
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PETITION NO. 1601 – TRITEC Americas, LLC (Petitioner) notice of election to waive exclusion from Connecticut Siting Council jurisdiction, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §16-50k(e), and petition for a declaratory ruling, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the proposed construction, maintenance and operation of a 0.999-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility located at 958 Route 163, Montville, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection

Dear Attorney Bachman,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) offers the following comments regarding Petition 1601.

1. Farmland Soils

The Petitioner states that the “Host Parcel is an operating hay farm” and that, in addition to supporting apiaries, the Petitioner “intends to continue all agricultural practices throughout the Project’s lifespan to its fullest capacity”. However, it is unclear how that might be accomplished. The Council wants to emphasize the importance of agricultural land in Connecticut and to note that the continuing accretion of multiple individual decisions to site solar facilities on productive agricultural land has cumulative regional economic and ecological implications. The Council recommends that the Petitioner 1) provide additional details on how the existing agricultural activities would continue, 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.

2. Wetlands and Erosion & Sedimentation (E&S) Controls

The Petitioner states that “all proposed development activities are located more than 150 feet from inland wetlands and watercourses. As such, no proposed site work is located within the 100-foot upland review area for wetlands.” However, Appendix G, Section 3.2.2 “Wetlands Impacts” states that approximately 0.1 acres would be impacted within the upland review area for Wetland 1. The Council recommends that the Petitioner clarify this information and assess the possibility of installing the proposed access road further north to maintain the undeveloped, partially vegetated buffer between the wetland system (to the south) and the proposed facility.

The Petitioner also notes that E&S controls, consisting of silt fencing with compost filter socks, geotextile silt fences with wings, erosion control matting, and an anti-tracking pad at the proposed facility entrance, would be installed to comply with standards set by the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control to manage the land disturbance from the development and protect surface water features. The Council supports efforts to

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Executive Director

minimize the impact of erosion and sedimentation, especially given the slope of the proposed access road, and 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, which has an effective date of March 30, 2024, as appropriate. In addition, the Council notes that certain E&S control products have been found to entangle wildlife, including reptiles, amphibians, birds and small mammals. The Council recommends that the Petitioner avoid/minimize the use of E&S control measures that are made of plastic and have the potential for wildlife entanglement.

3. Visual Impact

The Petitioner states that “vegetation buffers are proposed to shield the Facility from neighboring properties. Planting materials, consisting of a mix of evergreen species, will provide year-round screening on the northern and northeastern sides of the Project area.” The Council supports the Petitioner’s efforts to minimize any potential visual impact associated with the proposed facility and recommends that the proposed “evergreen species”, be native, deer-resistant species that would be of sufficient size to effectively screen the proposed facility.

The Council’s comments above addresses 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, flowing style.

Paul Aresta
Executive Director