



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 26, 2025

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
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DOCKET NO. 532 – LSE Serpens LLC (Lodestar Energy) (Applicant) application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a 3.0-megawatt-AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility and associated equipment on 13 parcels located south of West Hill Road (Parcel Nos. 253/003/018; 253/003/033 through 043 and 053-003-045), Torrington, Connecticut and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Attorney Bachman,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) supports the development of clean energy facilities on appropriate sites in Connecticut. The Council offers the following comments regarding Docket 532.

1. Core Forest

The Applicant notes that the proposed project would require the clearing of all existing vegetation within the approximately 19.2-acre limit of disturbance (LOD) on the proposed site, which consists of 10.9 acres of large core forest block and 8.3 acres of edge forest. Core forests provide habitat for many species of wildlife (edge-intolerant species), provide connectivity and corridors for species migration, and increased opportunity to maintain overall biodiversity. Further, forests and other natural habitats reduce water quality impacts associated with development, and sequester and store carbon. The proposed project would adversely impact the existing forest, including the large core forest block, given the Applicant's intent to remove all vegetation within the LOD. The Council **does not** support the destruction of core forest.

2. Wildlife

The Applicant notes that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Information for Planning and Conservation (IPAC) tool indicates that there is the possibility that the northern long-eared bat (NLEB), a species that has recently been reclassified as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act, and tricolored bat (TCB), a species proposed for official listing as endangered, might occur in the vicinity of the proposed project area. The Council also notes that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) Northern Long-eared Bat Map, dated July 24, 2023¹, identifies Winchester, the town immediately north of Torrington, as an area with known "Winter Occurrence" of NLEB. This is also confirmed by DEEP's determination letter, dated January 15, 2025, (Determination Number 202500333) that stated that the proposed project area is within 5 miles of a hibernaculum of the NLEB. The Council is

¹ <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/deep/nddb/nolongearedbat-map.pdf>

concerned about the potential adverse impacts on NLEB and TCB associated with the proposed tree clearing, which may decrease the availability of summer roosting/foraging habitat.

3. Public Water Supply and Spill Prevention

The Applicant notes that groundwater at the proposed site has been classified by the DEEP as GAA, which is defined by DEEP as “existing or potential public supply of water suitable for drinking without treatment”.² Further, the Applicant notes that the proposed site is located within the Nepaug Reservoir drinking supply watershed, which is a public water supply reservoir operated by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). The Council recommends that the Applicant incorporate the protective measures identified in the Department of Public Health’s “General Construction Best Management Practices for Sites within a Public Drinking Water Supply Area” guidance document.³ The Council also recommends that the Applicant notify the MDC prior to the proposed construction; provide the MDC with a point of contact for use during the construction and operation of the proposed project; and provide the MDC with permission to access and inspect the proposed site at any time.

The Council’s comments above addresses only certain elements of the materials provided by the Applicant 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, appearing to read "Paul Aresta", with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Aresta
Executive Director

² Connecticut DEEP, Water Quality Standards and Classifications Fact Sheet; <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/water/water-quality/fact-sheet-for-the-water-quality-standards-and-classifications>.

³ Connecticut Department of Public Health; https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/departments-and-agencies/dph/drinking_water/pdf/bmpfactsheetpdf.pdf