

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

June 24, 2026

Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
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Re: Petition 1711 – Greenskies Clean Energy LLC (Petitioner) petition for a declaratory ruling, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the construction, maintenance and operation of a 4.99-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility and associated equipment located at Parcel No. 146 007 0000 Schoolhouse Road along the Stafford municipal boundary in Ellington, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Attorney Bachman:

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) offers the following comments regarding Petition 1711.

Farmland Soils

The Petitioner states that “this site does not contain mapped prime farmland soils.” The Council notes that the proposed site is currently used for agriculture (orchard) and is designated as “farmland of statewide importance.” Consequently, the Council suggests that the Petitioner incorporate agrivoltaic practices and low-impact development to enable additional agricultural co-use including, but not limited to, the establishment of apiaries. The establishment of apiaries on the proposed site could be consistent with the Petitioner’s proposal to “incorporate a pollinator seed mix beneath the array and implement a mowing schedule that maintains vegetation to a desirable level that allows kestrels to see their prey.” In addition, the Council recommends that best practices be employed during construction that might allow for the future restoration of farmland soils to more productive agricultural use by minimizing grading, trenching, and compaction of farmland soils.

Wildlife

The Petitioner notes that DEEP’s Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) provided a preliminary determination for the proposed facility on July 18, 2025, “confirming that one Federal or State Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern, the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), has been documented within or in close proximity to the Project area.” And since “land disturbance activities including digging, ground clearing, heavy machinery driving staging, or trampling” will occur more than 100 feet into or cut across in a way that fragments the large parcels of grassland habitat on the proposed site, the Council recommends that the Petitioner consult with DEEP’s Wildlife Division to confirm 1) if the time of year restriction on land disturbance activities (March 1- July 30) is warranted given the results of the American kestrel survey; 2) if the mowing scheme, identified in the Petitioner’s Visual-Mechanical Checklist for Annual Preventative Maintenance & Emergency Response Plan (two to three (2-3) times annually), is appropriate or if more

specificity is required; and 3) if the recommendations identified in the Petitioner's report from Davison Environmental to Matt Goff, dated May 28, 2026, for American kestrel are appropriate. In addition, the Council suggests that the Petitioner inform the Connecticut NDDB of the potential presence of savannah sparrow at the proposed site, and if "Best Management Practice" recommendations are warranted for this state-listed species for the proposed project.

Water

The Council notes that the proposed project site is located in a drinking water supply watershed of the Connecticut Water Company's (CTWC) - Northern Reg-Western System and within a GAA groundwater classification area, which is a groundwater designation for use as existing or potential public supply of water suitable for drinking without treatment. While the Petitioner has identified some provisions for the use and storage of potential pollutants, the Council recommends that the Petitioner develop and implement a project specific plan for spill prevention and materials storage. The Council also recommends that the Petitioner review and incorporate the protective measures identified in the Department of Public Health (DPH)'s "General Construction Best Management Practices for Sites within a Public Drinking Water Supply Area" guidance document¹, which includes provisions for notification to and access for public water system personnel.

Given that a portion of the proposed work site is an orchard, the Council suggests that the Petitioner assess the soils within the orchard area for the presence of chemicals and pesticides, which might have been used within the orchard area, to protect worker safety. If chemicals and/or pesticides are found, the Council further suggests that the Petitioner assess whether soil disturbances during site work could release such chemicals and/or pesticides to the groundwater and/or impact worker safety.

Visibility

The Petitioner states that the "results of the viewshed analysis indicate that the Project may be visible from a total area measuring 52.6 acres". The Petitioner also states that "potential PV panel visibility would be mostly limited to the Project Site (i.e., the 74.6-acre parcel of land currently under control of the Petitioner) due to the screening provided by surrounding forest vegetation. Potential visibility extends up to 450 feet from the southern and eastern sides of the Project Site boundary into adjoining residential properties where vegetation is minimal." Given the proposed relocation of the access road and the requisite removal of vegetation along that portion of the southern property line, the Council suggests that the Petitioner assess if additional screening is warranted in that area to minimize the visual impact of the proposed facility from nearby residents.

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,



Paul Aresta
Executive Director

c. Robin Blum, Connecticut DEEP Wildlife Division
Eric McPhee, Connecticut Department of Public Health, Environmental Health & Drinking Water Branch

¹ Connecticut Department of Public Health; https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/departments-and-agencies/dph/dph/drinking_water/pdf/bmpfactsheetpdf.pdf