

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

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Melanie Bachman, Executive Director
Connecticut Siting Council
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Re: Petition No. 1716 – Hebron Solar One, 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 3.0-megawatt AC solar photovoltaic electric generating facility and associated equipment located at 52 Meeting House Road, Hebron, Connecticut, and associated electrical interconnection.

Dear Attorney Bachman:

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) offers the following comments regarding Petition 1716:

Vegetation and Core Forest

The Petitioner states that a “broadleaved deciduous woodland is present along the northern and eastern limits of the proposed Site” and “the limits of disturbance for the Project overlaps edge forest but impacts zero acres of Core Forest.” Further, the Petitioner notes that CT DEEP defines “Core Forests” as “forests surrounded by other forests, and in Connecticut, it has been defined as forest features that are relatively far (more than 300 feet) from the forest-non-forest boundary.” Consequently, the removal of edge forest and the establishment of a new “non-forest boundary” would directly impact the area of core forest. In many cases, the removal of edge forest is effectively removing the total area of core forest. The Council recommends that the removal of vegetation within the “edge forest” on the proposed site be minimized to the extent practicable, and that the area identified on Sheet 2.11 – Site Layout Map as “proposed area of tree cutting with stumps to remain” be maintained as early successional or shrubland habitat,¹ which typically consist of woody shrubs and small trees less than 15 feet in height, to benefit wildlife dependent on early-successional habitats.

Wildlife

The Council 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 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. Since the Petitioner proposes to remove vegetation along the northern, eastern and southeastern portions of the proposed project area, the Council recommends that the Petitioner consult with the DEEP’s Wildlife Division regarding protective measures, such as time of year restrictions on tree removal, to minimize potential impacts on NLEB and TCB. The Council also recommends that the Petitioner utilize the USFWS Northern Long-eared Bat and Tricolored bat Range-

wide determination key (Dkey)², available through the IPaC website, to confirm that the proposed project would not adversely affect these bat species.

Farmland Soils

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAG) stated that “there are approximately 4.3 acres of prime farmland located on the western portion of the parcel, outside the project footprint” and “the project footprint contains approximately 19 acres of statewide important farmland soils.” Consequently, the DoAG concluded that the “project will not materially affect the status of the prime farmland.” 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 agricultural land has cumulative regional economic and ecological implications. The Council recommends that the Petitioner employ best practices during construction and operation that might allow for the future restoration of farmland soils to a more productive agricultural state by minimizing grading, trenching, and compaction of farmland soils. The Council also recommends that the Petitioner comply with the requirements of the Department of Agriculture’s Agrivoltaics Requirements³ (Updated January 2026) for Shared Clean Energy Facilities, including but not limited to a) providing a vegetation and soil management plan, prepared by a soil scientist, and b) a soil health assessment, performed by a soil scientist, to establish baseline conditions for soil restoration upon decommissioning.

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

¹ CT DEEP, Managing Grasslands, Shrublands, and Young Forest Habitats for Wildlife: A Guide for the Northeast; <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/habitat/managing-grasslands-shrublands-and-young-forest-habitats-for-wildlife-a-guide-for-the-northeast>

² USFWS: <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/northern-long-eared-bat-and-tricolored-bat-range-wide-determination-key>

³ CT DoAG, Shared Clean Energy Facility; https://portal.ct.gov/doag/adarc/programs/solar-and-farming-overview/shared-clean-energy-facility?language=en_US