



Environmental Assessment

20 MW (AC) Solar Photovoltaic Project
197 Candlewood Mountain Road, New Milford, CT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure, Inc. (“Amec Foster Wheeler”) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (“EA”) on behalf of Candlewood Solar LLC (“Candlewood Solar”) for the proposed installation of a 20 megawatt (MW) AC (MWac), solar photovoltaic (PV) electric generating facility (referred to specifically as the “Facility”) to be located in the Town of New Milford, Connecticut (referred to generally as the “Project”). The Project will be located on portions of three (3) adjacent parcels that will accommodate the Facility, access road, and electric interconnection route (New Milford Assessor Map parcels 26/67.1, 9/6, and 34/31.1) (the portion of the parcels the Project occupies on three parcels together are referred to as the “Project Area”).

This EA has been prepared in conjunction with, and as an exhibit to, the Petition for Declaratory Ruling (the “Petition”), submitted to the Connecticut Siting Council (the “CSC”) by Candlewood Solar. The information contained in this EA provides necessary support for the Petition documenting that the Project, as proposed, will meet air and water quality standards of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (“DEEP”) and would not have a substantial adverse environmental effect.

The Facility will be constructed entirely on parcel 26/67.1 (197 Candlewood Mountain Road) located on the southern flank of Candlewood Mountain in west central New Milford, northwest of Candlewood Lake, east of Candlewood Mountain Road, and southwest of Route 7 (“Facility Parcel”). The Facility Parcel has a total area of 163.5 acres, of which the Facility will occupy approximately 73.0 acres. This parcel is adjacent to an old mine, which is located on the parcel immediately to the east. Adjacent parcels to the north, east and south are largely forested and undeveloped. Rural residential properties occur along Candlewood Mountain Road to the southwest and west.

The Facility Parcel is partially wooded, with approximately 15.9 acres of hay field/horse pasture. The Facility will be installed on the flat areas of the parcel, including the hay field/horse pasture areas. The Facility location will be accessed via an existing dirt road off of Candlewood Mountain Road. This road will be improved for use during construction and operation of the Project by installing twelve (12) inches of graded gravel. The route of the interconnection is planned to follow existing cleared access road and utility corridors to the extent practicable across the adjacent Project Area parcels to the east. The Project location and surrounding area are depicted on **Figure 1**.

The Facility will consist of approximately 75,000 solar PV panels and eight (8) inverters each with a combined output of 2.5 MW AC. The total Facility system size is 26.5 MW DC, with a total rated nameplate AC generating capacity of 20 MWac. The solar panels will be installed on a screwed-in mounting system due to shallow rock conditions across the Project Area. The Facility will be completely surrounded by a 7-foot high chain-link fence. The inverters would consist of eight (8) pad-mounted 2.5 MW inverters which will convert the DC power generated by the panels to AC power that can be fed to the grid. The power will be fed from the inverters to transformers which will step up the voltage from 1,500 Volts (“V”) to 13,800 V, upon which the power will be routed through two (2) 13.8 kilovolt (“kV”) conductors across the Project Area to the east (crossing parcels 9/6, and 34/31.1) to Route 7, whereupon they will connect with Eversource Energy conductors on Route 7, located approximately 4,800 feet to the northeast from the location of the Facility.

2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing conditions on the Project Area and surrounding properties, as detailed herein, are depicted on **Figure 2**. The following discussion provides details on the current conditions in these areas. The Project's effects on the environment of the Project Area and surrounding properties are detailed in **Section 3**.

2.1 Project Area Location and Access

The 163.5-acre parcel on which the Facility will be installed is located on the southern flank of Candlewood Mountain in west central New Milford, Litchfield County, northwest of Candlewood Lake, east of Candlewood Mountain Road, and southwest of Route 7. The interconnection route for the Project crosses two of the Project Area parcels that are located on the eastern flank of Candlewood Mountain. The New Milford/Sherman municipal boundary is located approximately 2,785 feet (0.5 mile) to the southwest of the Project Area at its closest point. The New Milford Tax Assessor map identifies the Project Area as being located on Parcels 26/67.1, 9/6, and 34/31.1.

The Project Area is undeveloped and partially wooded with hay fields/horse pasture in the southern portion of the array parcel. Existing utility corridors cross the interconnection parcels. Land use in the surrounding area is predominately rural residential and consists of large wooded tracts to the north, east and south with sparse residential development and horse/agricultural fields located along Candlewood Mountain Road to the west. Candlelight Farms Airport, a privately owned, turf-runway facility for small planes, is located west of Candlewood Mountain Road, just east of the Sherman municipal boundary.

Project Area topography in the area proposed for installation of the Facility slopes generally downward from the northeast to the southwest. Elevations along Candlewood Mountain Road in the vicinity of the Project Area range from 654 to 719 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). The location of the Facility ranges in elevation from approximately 728 to 918 feet AMSL. The peak of Candlewood Mountain, north of the Facility location, is approximately 998 feet AMSL. The interconnect route drops down the eastern flank of Candlewood Mountain before joining existing utility corridors to cross north of Candlewood Lake to Route 7 (see **Figure 1**).

Project Area access is gained from Candlewood Mountain Road to the west via an existing dirt road. This road provides current access to the hay field / horse pasture area in the southern portion of the Project Area and will be improved for use during construction and operation by installing twelve (12) inches of graded gravel.

2.2 Soils, Geology, and Topography

Soils

Soil survey data obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") Natural Resources Conservation Service ("NRCS") online Web Soil Survey ("WSS") indicates that the Project Area and surrounding area consist of several soil types. **Figure 3** and **Table 2.2-1** identify the mapped soils within the Project Area.

Table 2.2-1. Soils at the Project Area	
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name
3	Ridgebury, Leicester, and Whitman soils, 0 to 8 percent slopes, extremely stony
306	Udorthents-Urban land complex
46B	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony
47C	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 3 to 15 percent slopes, extremely stony
75C	Hollis-Chatfield-Rock outcrop complex, 3 to 15 percent slopes
75E	Hollis-Chatfield-Rock outcrop complex, 15 to 45 percent slopes
76F	Rock outcrop-Hollis complex, 45 to 60 percent slopes
84D	Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 15 to 25 percent slopes
85B	Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 3 to 8 percent slopes, very stony
86C	Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 3 to 15 percent slopes, extremely stony
86D	Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 15 to 35 percent slopes, extremely stony
284B	Paxton-Urban land complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes

Based on the WSS, there are no designated important farmlands associated with the Facility or Project Area. Important farmlands consist of prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide or local importance. However, the Town of New Milford GIS Mapping indicates that soil unit 85B - Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams, 3 to 8 percent slopes, very stony, is a designated locally important farmland soil.

Geology

Bedrock geology beneath the Project Area is identified as Ordovician granitic gneiss. Ordovician granite gneiss is described as white, light-gray, buff, or pink, generally foliated granitic gneiss, composed of sodic plagioclase, quartz, microcline, muscovite, and biotite, and locally garnet or sillimanite and it commonly contains numerous inclusions or layers of mica schist and gneiss (see **Figure 4**).

Topography

As proposed, the Facility will be located on the southwestern side of Candlewood Mountain which has a peak elevation of approximately 998 feet AMSL (see **Figure 1**). The Facility will be located between elevations 728 to 918 feet AMSL. Land surrounding the Facility location is at a much lower elevation (between approximately 250 feet AMSL to the north and 700 feet AMSL to the west and south). Candlewood Lake, located to the southeast, is at an elevation of approximately 429 feet. The interconnection route would run down the southeastern side of Candlewood Mountain and cross north of Candlewood Lake to Route 7.

2.3 Aquatic Resources

FEMA Floodplain

According to the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) Flood Insurance Rate Map (“FIRM”) for the Project Area (Panels 0900490011D and 0900490016D, effective June 4, 1987), the Rocky River corridor, which is mapped as beginning east of the Facility and flowing east and then north of the electric interconnection, is identified as Zone X, defined as areas of the 500-year flood, areas of 100-year flood with average depths of less than one foot or with drainage areas less than one square mile, and areas protected by levees from the 100-year flood (see **Figure 5**). The area is not protected by levees, however, it cannot be determined which of the first two floodplain categories is mapped at and proximate to the Project Area as depicted. As depicted on **Figure 6**, this floodplain corridor consists largely of wetlands rather than a continuous stream. A small portion of this Zone X floodplain intersects the eastern edge of the proposed tree clearing area associated with the array. The remainder of the parcel where the Facility will be located is also identified as Zone X, defined as areas determined to be outside the 500-year floodplain.

Wetlands and Watercourses

Thomas Pietras, a Connecticut soil scientist with Pietras Environmental Group, LLC delineated nine (9) wetlands and associated watercourses at the Project Area and along the interconnection route, on December 9, 10, and 11, 2016 and May 4, 2017. All delineated wetlands are regulated pursuant to the Connecticut Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act (“IWWA”) and Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulations for the Town of New Milford (“New Milford IWWR”), and with the exception of a small portion of Wetland I and all of Wetland IV, all delineated wetlands are also regulated pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act (“CWA”). Watercourses are associated with each of the wetlands except Wetlands II and III, all of which are intermittent except the Rocky River which flows out of Wetland VI. The wetlands and watercourses delineation report is included as **Attachment A** and a summary of delineated resources is described below and depicted on **Figure 6**. All delineated wetlands consist of at least a portion of forested inland wetland, a key habitat as identified in the 2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan (“WAP”), the majority of which are the key sub-habitat red maple swamp (see **Figure 7**). Wetlands I and II also contain the key habitat shrub inland wetland, and key sub-habitat shrub swamp.

Wetland I is a moderately large wetland that mainly supports forested swamp with some areas of shrub swamp. The terrain includes a mix of slight depressional, level, gently sloping and moderately sloping. Soils include poorly drained and very poorly drained, glacial till and very poorly drained organic soils. Some of the organic soils contain more than four (4) feet of peats and mucks. Portions of the very poorly drained organic soils are characterized by shallow (less than 12 inches) seasonal inundation. The wetland forms the headwaters for a seasonally flowing watercourse which flows southeasterly to easterly from the wetlands.

Wetland II is a narrow section of a wetland corridor extending in a south to north direction. A small pond is located beyond the Project Area to the south of the Facility Parcel. Drainage from the pond flows into a culvert that extends underground through the western portion of Wetland II. The wetland contains poorly drained, glacial till soils and supports a mix of forested swamp, shrub swamp and wet meadow.

Wetland III is a small forested swamp on a sloping hillside. The wetland contains poorly drained Ridgebury fine sandy loam and is characterized by minor side-slope seepage with seasonally

saturated soils. The seasonal ground water table is perched over the compact, lodgment till subsoil (hardpan).

Wetland IV consists of several small pockets of poorly drained Ridgebury fine sandy loam (state-regulated wetlands); these areas are located in the southwestern portion of the subject property and lie to the east of horse paddocks. A deep drainage ditch was excavated at the eastern edge of the horse paddocks. As a result of the excavated ditch the Ridgebury soils have been artificially drained and no longer possess wetland hydrology. The Ridgebury soils support a mix of hydrophytic and non-hydrophytic forest plants. These wetlands qualify as state-regulated inland wetlands, but do not qualify as federal wetlands.

Wetland V consists of a small vernal pool (see Vernal Pool section below). The vernal pool wetland is located in a small valley between two ridges where seasonally water is trapped in a shallow basin. The pool holds up to three feet of water during the wettest periods of the year. Excess drainage from the wetland passes to the northeast into an intermittent watercourse. The pool is located within a forested area. Vegetation is absent from the majority of the vernal pool due to the prolonged inundation.

Wetland VI includes a stream valley and a portion of a hillside characterized by side-slope seepage. A brook exits from a culvert located at the northern side of the Candlewood Lake dam and flows northerly through the stream valley. The watercourse is locally referred to as the Rocky River. A seasonally flowing brook passes easterly from a boulder train and merges with the Rocky River. The wetlands contain poorly drained and very poorly drained, glacial till soils and support forested swamp vegetation.

Wetland VII is characterized as hillslope, seasonally wet forested swamp (several acres or more in size). The soils are poorly drained glacial till soils containing compact, lodgment till (hardpan). The seasonal groundwater table is perched over the hardpan subsoil. A minor brook develops within the wetland and flows in a northeasterly direction and discharges into the Rocky River.

Wetland VIII is on a side slope located downslope from Candlewood Lake. The wetland contains poorly drained glacial till soils with a hardpan which are subject to seasonal seepage. A small watercourse exits from a culvert that outlets into the wetlands. The watercourse flows in a northerly direction for several hundred feet along the eastern side of an access road. These wetlands have been historically altered from some excavation which may be related to the construction of the existing utility access road. The wetlands support young forested swamp vegetation.

Wetland IX contains a small, seasonally flowing watercourse with a broad channel. On May 4, 2017 there was moderate flow within the channel. It is likely that the stream is dry for extended portions of the year. The stream is located on a sloping, forested hillside.

Vernal Pool

One naturally occurring vernal pool ("VP") which is also a forested inland wetland (Wetland V), was identified and delineated in the northeast portion of the Facility Parcel by Pietras Environmental Group, LLC, as identified on **Figure 6** and discussed herein. Calhoun and Klemens (2002) provides this operational definition of a VP based on common ecological functions identified by all states in the Region:

Vernal pools are seasonal bodies of water that attain maximum depths in spring or fall, and lack permanent surface water connections with other wetlands or water bodies. Pools fill with snowmelt or runoff in the spring, although some may be fed primarily by

*groundwater sources. The duration of surface flooding, known as hydroperiod, varies depending upon the pool and the year; vernal pool hydroperiods range along a continuum from less than 30 days to more than one year. Pools are generally small in size (< 2 acres), with the extent of vegetation varying widely. They lack established fish populations, usually as a result of periodic drying, and support communities dominated by animals adapted to living in temporary, fishless pools. In the Region, they provide essential breeding habitat for one or more wildlife species including Ambystomatid salamanders (*Ambystoma* spp., called “mole salamanders” because they live in burrows), wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*), and fairy shrimp (*Eubranchipus* spp.).*

Indicator species require VPs for breeding and evidence of their presence is used to confirm a VP, while facultative species may use VPs for breeding but use other habitat for breeding as well. VP indicator species in Connecticut include wood frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*), spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*), marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*), the Jefferson salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*)/blue-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*) complex, and fairy shrimp (*Anostraca* sp.).

Ryan Hale, an Amec Foster Wheeler Professional Wetland Scientist (“PWS”) conducted a survey of the VP on April 14, 2017. Eight (8) spotted salamander egg masses and five (5) wood frog egg masses were identified, none of which appeared to have started hatching. No hatched or grown indicator or facultative VP species were observed during the survey. The VP was approximately three to four feet deep at its center with little woody debris and a thick bed of leaf litter. The vernal pool would be classified as Tier I per Calhoun and Klemens (2002) as there is evidence of two amphibian species breeding in the pool, and at least 75 percent of the vernal pool envelope and 50 percent of the critical terrestrial habitat is undeveloped.

The VP envelope is the area within 100 feet of the spring high water mark, which has high densities of adult amphibians in the spring and recently emerged amphibians in the fall, and also provides water quality and trophic functions. Critical terrestrial habitat (“CTH”) extends from the edge of the envelope to 750 feet from the spring high water mark, which provides non-breeding adult habitat and migration zones. With the exception of a few rarely used access roads and stone walls that traverse the Project Area, the envelope and CTH of the VP in the Project Area consist of undisturbed forested areas.

2.4 Vegetation and Wildlife

The Project Area contains five (5) plant community types (a.k.a. key habitats) as classified in the WAP and depicted on **Figure 7**; upland forest, upland herbaceous, forested inland swamp, shrub inland wetlands, and unique (vernal pool) and man-made habitats (utility corridors and access roads). Forested inland wetlands, shrub inland wetlands, and the vernal pool habitats on the Project Area are discussed in the previous section. The remaining key habitats are described below.

Upland Forest

Upland forests consist of at least 60 percent tree canopy cover. Approximately 72.8 acres of the Project Area consist of upland forest, characterized as a mixture of northern hardwood forest and oak forest, which is part of a larger approximately 788 acre upland forested complex that extends primarily to the north, east, and south before intersecting residential areas, roads, agricultural areas, and Candlewood Lake. Upland forest is also present to the west of the Project Area to a lesser extent between the Project and the residences and agricultural lands to the west along Candlewood Mountain Road. Maximum tree canopy height, species diversity, and trees per acre

were estimated based on 2,500 square foot ("sq. ft.") square sample plots recorded at various representative locations in the Project Area. Average maximum canopy height is estimated to be between approximately 90 and 100 feet. Trees at least six (6) inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) per acre was calculated to be between approximately 122 and 314 trees per acre, with an average of approximately 209 trees per acre.

The upland forest is dominated or co-dominated depending on location by Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), black birch (*Betula lenta*), paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*), Eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), and white pine (*Pinus strobus*). The sub-canopy was sparse throughout the upland forest. Where present, it typically consisted of saplings of the tree species previously mentioned, as well as spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*). Herbaceous vegetation was also sparse, with few ferns present including Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*).

Upland Herbaceous

Approximately 15.9 acres of upland herbaceous key habitat, defined as herbaceous plants (sedges, grasses, herbs, forbs, and ferns) forming more than 25 percent of the cover, is present in the form of hayfield and pasture on the southern portion of the array parcel and would likely be characterized as key sub-habitat warm or cool season grasslands (see **Figure 7**). As field investigations were conducted in late fall and early spring when the hayfields were mowed or still dormant, respectively, positive identification of grass and other species was not possible due to the lack of inflorescence.

Man-Made Habitat

Approximately 0.7 acres of the electric interconnection route extends along man-made access roads or cleared right-of-way for existing underground fiber line, which would be characterized as key sub-habitats urban and man-made features and public utility transmission corridors, respectively.

Breeding Bird Inventory

A formal breeding bird survey was not conducted in the Project Area as field work was conducted prior to the spring migratory bird season (beginning mid to late April). Birds having a reasonable potential to breed in the Project Area have been inventoried based on identification of suitable habitat assessed by Ryan Hale of Amec Foster Wheeler during Project Area investigations in November 2016, information on wetland and stream habitats provided by Thomas Pietras of the Pietras Environmental Group, LLC, and available species information provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The list of bird species with the potential to breed in the Project Area is provided in **Table 2.4-1** below which includes the status for birds identified in the WAP as having the Greatest Conservation Need ("GCN").

Table 2.4-1. List of Bird Species with Potential to Breed on the Project Area.			
Common Name	Scientific Name	CS	Habitat Type
American crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>		UF, FSW, UH
American goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>		UH
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>		UF
American robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>		UF
bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus</i>	IM	UF, FSW
barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		UH
barred Owl	<i>Strix varia</i>		UF
bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	SC, VI	UH
black and white warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	IM	UF
black-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	VI	UF
black-capped chickadee	<i>Parus atricapillus</i>		UF
blue-gray gnatcatcher	<i>Poliopitila caerulea</i>		UH, UF
blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>		UF
broad-winged hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>	SC, VI	UF, FSW
brown creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	IM	FSW
brown-headed cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>		UH, UF
chipping sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>		UF
common grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>		UF, UH
common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		UF
common yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>		UH
cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>		UH
downy woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>		UF
eastern bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>		UH
eastern kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	IM	UH
eastern towhee	<i>Pipilo</i>	VI	UF
eastern wood pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	IM	UF
European starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		UH
field sparrow	<i>Spizella pusilla</i>	VI	
gray catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>		UF
great-crested flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>		UF
great Horned owl	<i>Bubo virginianus</i>		UF, UH
hairy woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>		UF
hermit thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>		UF
hooded warbler	<i>Wilsonia citrina</i>		UF
northern waterthrush	<i>Seiurus</i>	IM	FSW
red-winged blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>		UH
northern flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	VI	UF

Table 2.4-1. List of Bird Species with Potential to Breed on the Project Area.			
Common Name	Scientific Name	CS	Habitat Type
northern oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	IM	UF
house sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		UH
house wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>		UH
mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>		UH, UF
northern cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>		UF
ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>	IM	UF
pileated woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>		UF
red-bellied woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>		UF
red-eyed vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>		UF
red-shouldered hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>		UF
red-tailed hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>		UF, UH
rose-breasted grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus</i>	IM	UF
ruby-throated hummingbird	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>		UH
scarlet tanager	<i>Piranga olivacea</i>	VI	UF
song sparrow	<i>Melospiza Melodia</i>		UH
tree swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>		UH
tufted titmouse	<i>Parus bicolor</i>		UF
turkey vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>		UH
veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	IM	UF, FSW
white-breasted nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>		UF
wild turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>		UF, FSW, UH
wood duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>		FSW
wood thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	MI	UF
American Woodcock	<i>Scolopax minor</i>	MI	UF, FSW
worm-eating warbler	<i>Helmitheros</i>	VI	UF
yellow warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>		UH
yellow-throated vireo	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>		UF
WAP Conservation Status: IM – Important; VI – Very Important; MI – Most Important; SC – State-listed species of special concern			
Habitat Types (potential use): UF – upland forest; FSW – forested and/or shrub wetland; UH – upland herbaceous			

Rare Species

Connecticut State agencies are required to ensure that any activity authorized, funded or performed by a state agency does not threaten the continued existence of state-listed endangered or threatened species. Based on Amec Foster Wheeler’s review the most recent DEEP Natural Diversity Data Base (“NDDDB”) Endangered Species Map for New Milford, CT (Updated December 2016) and the Project Area (including the access road and the majority of the proposed

interconnection route) are mapped as a general location of State and Federal Listed Species and Significant Natural Communities (see **Figure 7**).

On April 17, 2017 Amec Foster Wheeler filed a NDDB Review Request with the DEEP regarding the Project (see **Attachment B**). As of the date of this filing a formal response has not been received identifying potential state-listed species that may be present at the Project Area. DEEP informally requested information regarding VP protection measures on April 25, 2017, which were provided by the Project on June 6, 2017 as described in **Section 3.6**, but DEEP has not yet responded to the Project review request. DEEP's response, once received, will be provided to the CSC and the Petitioner will work with DEEP to address any concerns regarding state-listed species, keeping the CSC apprised of the consultation as it progresses.

It should be noted that New Milford is a town identified by the NDDB as having known state endangered and federally threatened Northern long-eared bat ("NLEB"; *Myotis septentrionalis*) hibernacula; however, the exact location of hibernacula is not publicly available and can only be obtained through consultation with the NDDB. NLEB is the only federally listed species identified as potentially being present at the Project Area by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS") Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) online project planning tool. The Project may qualify for streamlined USFWS consultation regarding NLEB depending on whether known hibernacula are identified at or near the Project Area during the NDDB consultation process.

2.5 Water Supply Areas and Water Quality

Water Supply Areas

Candlewood Lake was constructed in 1929 as a reservoir for hydroelectric power and is Connecticut's largest lake and one of its most important water resources. New Milford is one of five Connecticut towns that border the lakeshore. Candlewood Lake in New Milford is located primarily to the south and east of the Project Area. The lake's watershed area is 26,461 acres of which approximately 2,629 acres (10%) are located within the Town of New Milford. Major segments of the watershed and lake shore area are intensively developed. The lake has experienced a gradual deterioration of water quality since about 1950. Land development is a primary source of stormwater runoff that can carry nutrients and pollutants that contribute to the eutrophication of the lake and deterioration of lake and ground water quality.

There is an existing public water supply aquifer protection area located northeast and southeast of the Project Area and Candlewood Lake (see **Figure 8**).

Aquarion Water Company ("Aquarion") provides water to New Milford (commercial, industrial, public authorities, and residential) by private water systems or by private well. Aquarion has six (6) wells that supply water to New Milford customers from two (2) well fields; Indian Field Well Field located off Route 7 approximately 0.4 mile east of the proposed interconnection at its closest point to the well property, and the Peagler Hill Road Well Field located along Peagler Hill Road approximately 1.1 mile east of the proposed interconnection at its closest point to the well property. Both well fields contain three (3) stratified drift wells that draw water from the Housatonic Basin Aquifer.

The Housatonic River is located east of the Project Area and Candlewood Lake. Rocky River flows through a portion of the Project Area and is a tributary of the Housatonic River. Great Mountain Pond is located southwest of the Project Area, on the west side of Candlewood

Mountain Road. Wetlands and watercourses at the Project Area are further discussed in **Section 2.3**.

Water Quality

The groundwater quality underlying the Project Area is classified by DEEP as “GA”. As noted on the Water Quality Classifications, New Milford, CT map created November 2015, Class GA designated uses are existing private and potential public or private supplies of water suitable for drinking without treatment and base flow for hydraulically-connected surface water bodies. All ground waters not specifically classified are considered as Class GA. Discharges are restricted to discharge from septage treatment facilities subject to stringent treatment and discharge requirements, and other wastes of natural origin that easily biodegrade and present no threat to groundwater.

2.6 Land Use and Zoning

Existing Land Use

The Project will be located in the Town of New Milford, Litchfield County, Connecticut. The Project Area consists of approximately 89.4 acres of land including the electric interconnection route and access road. The Facility will be located east of Candlewood Mountain Road and northwest of the New Milford portion of Candlewood Lake, and is shown on Assessor’s Map 26, Lot 67.1 (see **Figure 9**). The Project includes an approximately 1,292 foot long existing access road leading east from Candlewood Mountain Road, and a 6,961 foot linear electric interconnect route that passes through two (2) parcels to the east from the array (parcels 9/6 and 34/31.1) (see **Figures 1 and 2**).

The Project Area is partially forested with three hayfields/pastures in use on the southern portion of the Facility parcel. No buildings or other structures are present in the forested area; however, stone walls are present in several locations. Rock outcrops are present adjacent to the east of the proposed Facility. The existing access road leading to the Facility from Candlewood Mountain Road is dirt/gravel, and partially overgrown with vegetation in some areas. The electric interconnection route passes through forested areas down a steep slope to the east of the Facility, leading to forested areas adjacent to existing access roadways and an existing cleared fiber line right-of-way (ROW) to its terminus at Kent Road/Route 7.

Candlewood Mountain is part of the Housatonic Range Trail, a 6.2-mile footpath that starts in Gaylordsville, Connecticut and ends at the top of Candlewood Mountain in New Milford, north of the Facility location. The Trail is part of Connecticut’s Blue Trail system and is maintained by volunteers. The trail approaches the top of Candlewood Mountain from the north and does not cross the portion of the property to be developed (see **Section 2.9**).

Land uses within one mile of the Project Area are diverse and include undeveloped forest, agricultural, residential, industrial, and business uses and an airport. The closest residence is located approximately 470 feet to the west of the Project Area on Candlewood Mountain Road. Residences south of the Project Area off of Lookout Ridge Road and Acorn Lane are approximately 910 feet from the Project Area. Candlelight Farms Inn is located approximately 695 feet south/southwest of the Project Area off of Candlewood Mountain Road. Residences to the north and northwest are at a lower elevation, approximately 675 to 710 feet to the west, 390 to 630 feet to the northwest, and 250 to 350 feet to the north. Residences to the south are also at a lower elevation, approximately 680 to 750 feet. The Town of Sherman is located

approximately 2,785 feet (0.5 mile) west of the Project Area (from the edge of the access road) and approximately 3,274 feet (0.6 mile) from the Project limit of clearing.

Zoning

The New Milford Zoning Regulations amended as of June 20, 2016 and the Zoning Map entitled "Zoning Map of the Town of New Milford, Connecticut" (March 1995, last revised March 1, 2006) (see **Figure 10**) regulate land use and development in the Town of New Milford. According to the Zoning Map, the Facility parcel is located in a Major Planned Residential Development District ("MPRDD") #1, while the interconnection parcels are zoned Industrial (I) and Residential ("R-80"). In the Payment of Lieu of Taxes ("PILOT") agreement entered into as of February 17, 2017, New Milford Clean Power, LLC agrees to voluntarily terminate the MPRDD zoning that currently applies to the property and portion of the Project Area and work with the New Milford Zoning Commission to change the zoning of the MPRDD parcel to R-80 Residential (see **Attachment C**, Section 12(b)).

Additionally, a portion of the Project Area is located within the Candlewood Lake Watershed District ("CLWD"), and as designed, a portion of the Project is within the CLWD (see **Figure 11**). As such, Chapter 104 of the New Milford Zoning Regulations, as applicable, would apply to development on that parcel.

2.7 Cultural Resources

A request for project review, which included a Project Review Cover Form, Project description, Project maps, historic maps of the Project Area, and current photographs of the Project Area was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") on April 17, 2017. A copy of the complete submittal is provided in **Attachment E**. As of the date of this filing, a response has not yet been received from the SHPO.

A historic aerial photograph from 1934 shows the majority of the Project Area was in agricultural use at that time. By 1965, much of the agricultural land had reverted back to forest except the existing pasture and hay field. Several stone walls are present throughout the Project Area.

Based on a review of publicly available on-line National Register of Historic Places ("NHRP") mapping, the closest non-restricted property listed on the NHRP to the solar array is Boardman's Bridge at Boardman Road over the Housatonic River in New Milford (76001983), approximately 1.0 mile to the north of the Facility and 1.1 mile northwest of the terminus of the electrical interconnection. The closest non-restricted NHRP property to the interconnection is the Carl F. Schoverling Tobacco Warehouse (The Flat Iron Building) (82004446) at One Wellsville Avenue in New Milford, approximately 0.9 mile to the east of the interconnection terminus.

The New Milford Center Historic District (86001255) is located east of the Project Area and Housatonic River in the area of Bennett and Elm Streets, Center Cemetery, East, South Main, Mill, and Railroad Streets. The New Milford Center Historic District is approximately 1.8 miles from the Project Area and approximately 1.0 mile from the terminus of the electrical interconnection. The United Bank Building is also listed and within the New Milford Center Historic District (82004447; 19-21 Main Street) as is the Housatonic Railroad Station (84001062) on Railroad Street. The Wildman, E. A., & Co. Tobacco Warehouse (88000731) and Merritt Beach & Son Building (92000403) are located just outside the District on Bridge Street (34 and 30 Bridge Street, respectively). The Halpine, J. S., Tobacco Warehouse (82001002) is also located outside of the District off of West and Mill Streets, south of the District. These properties are of similar distance to the Project Area and electrical interconnection.

The Sherman Historic District is located approximately 1.7 miles west of the Project Area (91000956) in the Town of Sherman in the area of Veterans Memorial Park and Connecticut Routes 37 and 39.

2.8 Ambient Noise Environment

No background noise levels have been measured at the Project Area. The Project Area and vicinity is a rural, agricultural area with sparse residential development. Existing noise sources in the Project Area include traffic generated noise from various local roadways, plane noises from Candlelight Farms Airport, local neighborhood activities, outdoor recreational activities associated with Candlewood Lake and events at Candlelight Farms Inn (weddings, functions, etc.). The closest noise sensitive receptors in the Project Area include residences to the west and south (approximately 400 feet and 910 feet, respectively) and Candlelight Farms to the south/southwest (approximately 695 feet).

2.9 Scenic and Recreational Areas and Community Facilities

New Milford is rich in scenic and recreational areas and community facilities. Due to the limited impact of the Project on surrounding areas once operational (the Project would not result in air, noise, traffic or other impacts to the surrounding community) only resources within 0.5 mile of the Project Area are considered herein. **Table 2.9-1** identifies scenic and recreational resources within 0.5 mile of the Project Area. There are no community facilities such as youth services or senior centers, libraries, hospitals, fire stations, police stations, or emergency services within 0.5 mile of the Project Area.

Table 2.9-1. Scenic, Recreational and Community Facilities Within ½ Mile of the Project Area.			
Resource Type	Name	Address	Closest Distance and Direction from Project Area
Recreational / Park	Housatonic Range Trail / Blue Trail System	Candlewood Mountain, New Milford, CT 06776	~755 feet North of array
	Candlewood Lake	Candlewood Lake, New Milford, CT 06776	~250 feet Southeast of interconnection
	Lynn Deming Park	134 Candlewood Lake Road North, New Milford, CT 06776	~720 feet Southeast of interconnection route
	Millstone Ridge Beach	Millstone Ridge Road, New Milford, CT 06776	~1,720 feet Southeast of array

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

3.1 Project Description

The Project will consist of a 26.5 MW DC solar PV array and associated balance of system components, including transformers, inverters, combiners, wiring, and medium voltage conductors to connect the project to the New England Independent System Operator (“ISO-NE”) grid. The Facility itself would consist of approximately 75,000 individual solar panels mounted on steel racking supports. The racking system would be anchored to the ground by Terrasmart vertical screws installed four (4) to six (6) feet into the underlying soil/rock. The panels themselves would be oriented to face directly south at a tilt angle of fifteen (15) degrees. The panels would be assembled to the racking in a “landscape” orientation, with the top height of the highest panel being at approximately nine to ten (9 to 10) feet above ground, and the bottom edge of the lowest panel approximately two to three (2 to 3) feet above ground.

The Project will include eight (8) utility scale inverters. Each inverter would be nameplate rated at 2,500 kilowatt (“kW”). The inverters would convert the DC power from the panels to AC power. The AC power would be fed to eight (8) transformers, which would step the voltage up from 1,500 V to 13,800 V and feed the power to the conductors which would run from the Facility to the interconnection point. The inverters and transformers would be located on concrete pads.

Access to the Project Area will be from Candlewood Mountain Road via a 12-foot wide existing driveway which would be improved with gravel. This will be the only vehicular access to the Project Area during construction and operation of the Facility. An anti-tracking pad would be installed at the entrance to the driveway on Candlewood Mountain Road.

During construction, the Project will be broken up into five phases, per the 2002 Connecticut Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for large construction Project Areas. The phases include:

- ▶ Phase I – Access Road Construction
- ▶ Phase II – Project Area Clearing, Stump Removal, and Limited Grading
- ▶ Phase III – Solar Array (Facility) Installation
- ▶ Phase IV – Interconnection Route
- ▶ Phase V – Perimeter Fence Installation

The intent of phasing would be to minimize the amount of surface soil exposed at any one time during construction of the Project. Phase III will include several sub-phases, which will allow the contractors to work from areas of higher elevation to lower elevation, stabilizing surface soils as work progresses, and preventing the discharge of stormwater run-on onto newly stabilized areas. Installation of ground screws would be performed on stabilized ground.

Phases IV and V may be conducted at the same time, and/or at the same time as Phase II, depending on contractor coordination, available space, and timing of stabilization activities.

Sediment traps are proposed for all areas greater than two (2) acres, which drain to a common point. No area of exposed soil greater than five (5) acres, and draining to a common point, is proposed as part of the design. Upon completion, the sediment traps would be reconstructed as permanent water quality swales. Additional details regarding each phase are included in the Stormwater Management Plan (see **Section 3.7**).

The Facility will be surrounded by a 7-foot chain link fence. This fence and the Facility itself, due to a significant tree buffer, and elevated location, will be largely shielded from public view on Candlewood Mountain Road. The Facility will not consume any raw materials, will not produce any air emissions or other byproducts, and will not be occupied or otherwise staffed during normal Facility operation.

The Facility will be interconnected directly to the interconnection point via a dedicated circuit from the Facility Project Area. The exact means of interconnection and associated protection circuitry will be determined after the completion of the distribution and transmission level impact studies in progress.

The dedicated circuit will be constructed according to local electric utility (Eversource Energy) standards. The overhead lines would be of Rural Utilities Service ("RUS") double-circuit design and properly guyed and anchored according to RUS Construction Standards.

3.2 Land Use

Proposed Land Use

As currently proposed, approximately 72.8 acres of forest will be cleared, of which 57.1 acres will be for the Facility itself, 11.4 acres would be cleared to eliminate shading around the Facility, and 4.3 acres would be cleared for the interconnection to the Facility. The Facility will occupy 15.9 acres of hay field and pasture which will remain as herbaceous growth. Following the installation of the Facility, the area around the Facility and the areas cleared for the interconnection route to the Facility will be allowed to return to herbaceous and/or shrub growth. The existing access roadways and cleared fiber line right-of-way along the interconnect route are not anticipated to change from current conditions following the installation of the interconnection with the exception of upgrades to the surface of the access road. Portions of the existing access road may be graded and gravel added as needed which would remain for continued access to the Facility

Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans

The Project is consistent with the New Milford 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development. Specifically, the Project has been designed and would be implemented so as to minimize impacts on the natural environment and avoid adverse effects to the extent practicable on water quality, soil erosion, and stormwater runoff. Additionally, consistent with the Plan and in accordance with the PILOT agreement:

*Prior to engaging in tree removal and/or logging activities on the Property, the Developer shall (i) retain at its sole cost a State of Connecticut Certified Forester to review Developer's tree removal and/or logging plans and formulate recommendations on the minimization of damage to natural and ecological resources located on the Property, and (ii) shall use commercially reasonable efforts to comply with all recommendations made by the retained Forester in conducting tree-removal and/or logging operations on the Property, subject to any more stringent requirements imposed by the Connecticut Siting Council. (see **Attachment C. 12(c)**).*

The Project is also consistent with the State's Conservation & Development Policies, The Plan for Connecticut 2013-2018, prepared by the Office of Policy and Management in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 16a-29 as environmental impacts have been minimized and all applicable approvals (e.g., IWWC) will be obtained, no scenic resources will be impacted, and forested buffer around the Project will preserve the rural character of the area. Further, the

Project is consistent with the Housatonic Valley Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, adopted effective July 1, 2009, which promotes the use of solar as a renewable energy generation source to reduce carbon air emissions.

As part of the PILOT agreement, and consistent with the CSC's jurisdiction, the Project will not require a review by the New Milford Planning Commission. Under the terms of the PILOT Agreement, Petitioner will obtain approval of a storm water management plan for the Project from the New Milford Inland Wetlands Officer and/or the Mayor's Office. In compliance with the PILOT agreement, the Project will obtain all required approvals and comply with all stipulations related to floodplains, wetlands and watercourses, soil erosion and sedimentation control, excavation/grading, parking, and signage. Landscaping, screening, and buffer area standards including required property setbacks would also be incorporated into the Project design in accordance with the requirements of the PILOT agreement. No lighting is proposed as part of the Project.

3.3 Air Quality

During construction of the Project, minor emissions from regulated air pollutants and greenhouse gases associated with the operation of construction vehicles and equipment may occur. No air permit is required for construction of the Facility. Temporary construction related emissions will be controlled by implementing appropriate measures (e.g., dust control, limits on idling of equipment, proper maintenance of vehicles and equipment, etc.). Any potential air quality effects resulting from construction activities for the Project would be localized, temporary and de-minimis.

No emission sources are associated with operation of the Facility and the Facility would not produce any emissions of regulated air pollutants or greenhouse gases. No air permit would be required for operation of the Facility. A limited number of vehicle trips (2 to 3 trips per year) would be required for maintenance of the Facility; however, such vehicle trips would not result in a meaningful or detectable increase in vehicle emissions in the Project Area vicinity.

The Project will result in the elimination of approximately 23,894 metric tons of carbon dioxide ("CO₂") equivalent emissions based on the generation of 34,000,000 kilowatt hours of electricity in its first year, which is the equivalent of removing 5,047 vehicles off the roads and the amount of carbon sequestered by 22,619 acres of U.S. forests in one year (see **Attachment F**).

3.4 Soils, Geology and Topography

No adverse effect is anticipated to soils, geology, or topography as a result of the Project. As described in **Section 3.8**, erosion and sedimentation controls would be installed prior to work activities to avoid and minimize soil erosion. Once vegetative clearing activities are completed (removal of trees, stumps, and other vegetation as needed), the minimum grading required to accommodate the array, access road, and electrical interconnection would be performed. No deep intrusions are planned as part of the Project. One-inch to two-inch diameter pilot holes to depths specified by the solar panel manufacturer will be augered into the soil for the installation of the Facility, and overhead utility poles will be installed to accommodate the electrical interconnection. Bedrock is not anticipated to be encountered given the minimal subsurface disturbance required; however if bedrock is required it would be drilled to accommodate the proposed Facility. As required by the General Permit for the Discharge of Stormwater and Dewatering Wastewaters from Construction Activities (Construction General Permit or "CGP") required to be obtained for the Project, all disturbed areas would be re-vegetated and erosion and

sedimentation controls removed once all disturbed areas have been permanently stabilized. No alteration of the macrotopography of the Project Area would occur.

3.5 Aquatic Resources

FEMA Floodplain

As explained in Section 2.3, it cannot be determined which of the identified floodplain categories is mapped at and proximate to the Project Area as depicted in **Figure 5**. However, topography within the small portion of the proposed tree clearing area associated with the array would not be significantly altered, and therefore no adverse effect to FEMA floodplain is anticipated from the Project.

Wetlands and Watercourses

No wetlands or watercourses will be directly impacted by installation of the Facility and associated appurtenances and tree clearing, or the access road. Tree clearing would occur to within 15 feet of Wetlands I and III associated with the solar array and the fence would be located 50 feet from Wetland III at its closest point and 65 feet from Wetland I at its closest point. The closest the Facility will be from wetlands is 67 feet from Wetland III. The interconnection route to the Facility has been redesigned from the initial concept to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands and watercourses to the extent practicable. No direct impacts to wetlands or watercourses would be required to install the utility poles and guy wires associated with the overhead electric interconnection, but approximately 2,322 sq. ft. (0.05 acres) of Wetlands VI, VII, VIII, and IX would be converted from forested wetlands to emergent and/or shrub wetlands to provide vertical clearance for the overhead utility lines.

Short term and temporary impacts to wetlands and watercourses during construction will be avoided and minimized by clearly demarcating limits of work with properly installed soil erosion and sediment controls prior to commencement of construction that would be designed, installed, and maintained as prescribed in the CGP, and the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (“IWWC”) and CWA permits that would be obtained for the Project. All contractors would be educated of the requirements of the CGP and any other environmental permit stipulations. The Environmental Monitor responsible for ensuring the wetlands and watercourses protection measures are adhered to during the Project would be identified prior to construction commencement.

Erosion control products that use plastic netting that may entangle wildlife such as reptiles, amphibians, birds, and small mammals would not be used, nor permanent erosion control products. Temporary erosion control products free of plastic netting and where feasible composed of biodegradable material, would be used. As required by the CGP, erosion and sedimentation controls would be inspected on a regular basis to ensure their integrity and proper installation. An appropriate amount of additional erosion and sedimentation controls would be kept at the Project Area in the event repairs or replacement are required. All erosion and sedimentation controls would be removed within 30 days of permanent Project Area stabilization.

To prevent adverse impacts from inadvertent release of petroleum and hazardous materials during construction, spill kits with a sufficient supply of absorbent materials and appropriate disposal containers will be at the Project Area at all times, and refueling of machinery or storage of petroleum or hazardous materials would not take place within 100 feet of wetlands or watercourses. Spill response and clean up procedures will include removal of the containment of the spill source, applying absorbent materials on and around the spill area, determination of the

spill volume and prevention of migration to wetlands and watercourses, notification to Project Area employees and appropriate local, state, and federal agencies as required, and disposal of absorbent materials in compliance with applicable regulations. Application of herbicides and pesticides, if required, will not take place in or within 100 feet of wetlands and watercourses.

As previously discussed, the only impacts to wetlands and watercourses would be the conversion of forested wetlands to emergent and/or shrub wetlands to accommodate the overhead electrical interconnection, and temporary access through wetlands and/or watercourses to perform the activities. Approval to convert these forested wetlands would be required from the New Milford Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (“IWWC”) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (“USACE”). Based on the results of the wetlands and watercourses delineation, the original electrical interconnection design has been realigned to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands and watercourses to the extent practicable. Therefore, the Project is anticipated to qualify for Self-Verification (“SV”) under the USACE General Permits for the State of Connecticut pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA, as the Project would result in less than 5,000 sq. ft. of impacts to wetlands and watercourses. Specifically, the Project meets the criteria for General Permit (GP) - Utility Line Activities, which does not require an Individual Water Quality Certification (WQC) under Section 401 of the CWA as it has been automatically granted for this GP when the activities qualify for SV.

If heavy machinery is required within wetlands or watercourses, timber mats or similar will be used to access the forest conversion areas to avoid rutting and soil compaction, and all temporarily impacted areas from tree removal would be restored as required by permit conditions. No grading or alteration of hydrology in wetlands or watercourses will occur. Mitigation for forest conversion, if required, would be determined during the permit process and will be adhered to and monitored in accordance with permit conditions to ensure there will be no net loss in wetlands and watercourses functions, and no adverse effect from the Project.

Vernal Pools

The Project will not have an adverse effect to the Tier I vernal pool at the Project Area by adhering to the recommended measures prescribed by Calhoun and Klemens (2002) to the extent practicable including:

- ▶ No impacts would occur within the vernal pool depression or 100-foot envelope (see **Figure 13**).
- ▶ The total length of roads within the 750-foot critical terrestrial habitat (“CTH”) would be the minimum required to access the northern portion of the array for maintenance or emergency activities.
- ▶ Project Area clearing, grading, and construction activities will be limited to less than 25% of the entire vernal pool habitat (i.e., the vernal pool depression, envelope, and CTH), calculated as follows:
 - ▶ Total area of vernal pool habitat: 48.5 acres (2,111,984.3 sq. ft.)
 - ▶ Total area of proposed Project Area clearing, grading, and construction: 11.3 acres (491,550.7 sq. ft.)
 - ▶ Total percentage of impact to vernal pool habitat: 23.3%
- ▶ Any ruts or artificial depressions created as part of the project will be refilled to grade to avoid creation of decoy vernal pools.
- ▶ Erosion and sedimentation controls will be implemented per the required CGP and other permit conditions.

- ▶ Impervious surfaces will be minimized within the vernal pool habitat, including fence posts and support posts for the solar panel racking system.
- ▶ No lighting would be required for the Project.

3.6 Vegetation and Wildlife

The Project will result in the total ground disturbance of approximately 89.4 acres. The resulting gravel and grass surfaces associated with the construction of the Project will alter the habitat types present at the Project Area (upland forested and forested/shrub wetland). Upland herbaceous habitats would not be permanently altered as the portion of the Project Area they are located in is within the area proposed for the solar array, which would continue to be upland herbaceous habitat following installation of the Project. As currently proposed, approximately 72.8 acres of forest would be cleared, of which 57.1 acres would be for the array itself, 11.4 acres would be cleared to eliminate shading around the array, and 4.3 acres would be cleared for the interconnection. At an average of 209 trees per acre, it is estimated that approximately 15,215 trees six (6) inches DBH will be removed as part of the Project.

Initial clearing and construction activities will result in the disruption of wildlife habitat at the Project Area. Smaller, less mobile wildlife species could experience direct mortality during clearing, grading, and construction activities. Other wildlife species would likely leave the immediate area when these activities begin and relocate to similar nearby habitats. Other impacts on wildlife during construction, such as noise would be temporary in nature (4 to 6 months) and only occur within specified hours during the daytime. Erosion controls installed at the limit of Project disturbance would act as a barrier to prevent smaller species from migrating to the Project Area during construction.

The impact of operation of the Project on wildlife would be the alteration of habitat in areas where forested uplands and wetlands have been converted to herbaceous and/or shrub communities. This herbaceous and/or shrub habitat would be of less value to wildlife species that prefer forested habitats, but would provide new habitat for those species preferring herbaceous, shrub, and forest edge habitats. The fence around the Facility will also limit use of the upland herbaceous habitat to smaller species able to traverse the chain-link fence as well as birds. Although permanent alteration of food and cover sources may occur, the species known to occur in the Project area are not dependent on habitats that would be affected for the overall fitness or reproductive viability of the populations as a whole. Many of the mammal, bird, reptile, and amphibian species are adaptive to changing habitat conditions and have the capability of temporarily or permanently expanding or shifting their home ranges to find alternative sources of food, water, and shelter in the adjacent upland and wetland forested areas. At the end of the operational life of the Project, anticipated to be 20 to 30 years, the Facility will be removed in accordance with decommissioning requirements and the Project Area will be allowed to revert back to natural habitat.

The University of Connecticut (“UCONN”) Center for Land Use Education and Research’s (“CLEAR”) Forest Fragmentation Study indicates that a minimum of 250 acres of upland forest is needed to support sensitive edge-tolerant forest bird species (minimum 500 acres recommended). Core forest areas that provide optimal breeding areas for forest-interior birds are considered greater than 300 feet away from non-forested areas. As depicted on **Figure 14**, approximately 788 acres of contiguous forest is present on and adjacent to the Project Area, of which 443 acres are considered core forest and 345 acres are considered edge forest (within 300 feet of non-forested areas). The Project would reduce the area of core forest to 348 acres and will increase edge forest to 370 acres (see **Figure 15**). The minimum area of core forest required

to support sensitive edge-tolerant forest bird species (250 acres) will be maintained during operation of the Project.

Many grassland bird species require a minimum upland herbaceous patch size of 25 acres, and as the upland herbaceous community at the Project Area is 15.9 acres and is fragmented, it is not currently capable of supporting a large number of grassland species. The addition of upland herbaceous habitat as a result of forest conversion as a result of the Project may provide the habitat area required to support additional grassland bird species compared to current conditions.

Rare Species

As previously discussed in **Section 2.4**, information regarding rare species potentially at the Project Area has not been provided by DEEP as of the date of this submittal. Once determined, the petitioner will work with DEEP to address any concerns regarding state-listed species, keeping the CSC apprised of the consultation as it progresses.

3.7 Water Quality

The Project will not require water withdrawals for operation and would not result in wastewater discharges. The Facility will be unstaffed and require no potable water supplies and no sanitary discharges are planned. Water required for construction (dust control, etc.) would be supplied to the Project Area by tanker trucks. No fuels or hazardous materials will be stored at the Project Area during operation. Appropriate measures will be implemented during construction to prevent accidental releases of fuels from vehicles and equipment. Therefore, construction and operation of the Project would not result in any direct effect on water supplies or water quality at the Project Area.

Construction of the Project will require coverage under the CGP which requires the development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Control Plan (“SPCP”) to prevent the movement of sediment beyond the Project Area and into nearby water bodies. Additionally, in accordance with the PILOT agreement entered into as of February 17, 2017, a storm water management plan complying with the provisions of the PILOT must be approved by the Inland Wetland Officer and/or Mayor’s Office (see **Attachment C**). The SPCP/storm water management plan would outline the temporary and permanent soil surface Erosion and Sediment Control (“E&S Control”) Measures and Best Management Practices (“BMPs”) that would be implemented to prevent the pollution of air, water, and land. The Project has been designed in accordance with the requirements of the 2004 Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual. Supporting calculations are included in the **Stormwater Management Plan (SMP)**, attached as **Attachment D**, indicating that the proposed project meets the applicable requirements for:

- ▶ Source Control and Pollution Prevention
- ▶ Alternative Project Area Planning and Design
- ▶ Stormwater Treatment
- ▶ Flood Control and Peak Runoff Attenuation.

Construction-period erosion and sediment controls will be implemented to prevent erosion of soils during construction and sedimentation impacts to downgradient resources. Stormwater management practices to be implemented during construction include run-off diversions, linear sediment barriers, sediment traps, stockpile management areas, stabilization measures, and selective clearing practices. Upon completion of construction, sediment traps will be re-constructed as water quality swales, which will discharge through level spreaders, maintaining existing downgradient flow patterns.

The goal of the design is to control post-development peak runoff rates to corresponding pre-development peak runoff rates. Groundwater recharge will also be maintained under post-development conditions.

As required by the PILOT agreement, at all times during construction, installation, and operation of the Project, the Project shall comply with the 2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control, DEP Bulletin 34; the 2004 Connecticut Stormwater Quality Manual, and any more stringent standards relating to soil erosion, sedimentation control, and stormwater quality that may be imposed by the CSC or other permitting agencies. Implementation of E&S Control Measures and BMPs will reduce any potential impacts to surface water quality on and in the vicinity of the Project Area. No significant impacts to water quality are expected as a result of Project construction or operation.

3.8 Cultural Resources

As noted in **Section 2.7** above, based on a review of on-line, publicly available National Register of Historic Places (“NHRP”) mapping, the closest non-restricted property listed on the NHRP to the solar array is approximately 1.0 mile to the north and 1.1 miles northwest of the terminus of the electrical interconnection (Boardman’s Bridge) and the closest non-restricted NHRP property to the interconnection terminus is approximately 0.9 miles east of the interconnection terminus (The Flat Iron Building).

The Facility will be located on the side of Candlewood Mountain, which has an elevation of approximately 998 feet and is 1.0 mile or more from the non-restricted NHRP listed properties and Districts identified through publicly available on-line mapping. Additionally, with the exception of the southernmost tip of the property (currently cleared hayfield/pasture), a forested perimeter within the subject property will remain. While the Petitioner will work to maintain stone walls wherever possible, it is anticipated that in general, stone walls located within the area of the Facility will be removed. Areas of stone walls outside of the Facility will remain untouched. Portions of the electrical interconnection route will be cleared; however forested areas will surround the transmission line corridor with the exception of the existing access roadways and an existing cleared fiber line right-of-way (“ROW”). As described in **Section 3.11**, the Facility and interconnection facilities are not expected to be visible from most surrounding locations due to the existing forested areas surrounding the Project Area. The above noted resources are well removed from areas of potential line of sight. As such, no adverse impacts to the non-restricted properties or districts listed on the NHRP, including visual impacts, are anticipated as a result of the Project.

As noted, a Request for Project Review was filed with SHPO on April 17, 2017. When a response is received from the SHPO, a copy will be provided to the CSC, and the Petitioner will work with SHPO to mitigate for any adverse impacts to cultural resources.

3.9 Noise Environment

Some noise will be generated during tree clearing activities and during the construction and installation of the Project, but only when the construction equipment is operating. Various types of construction equipment will generate engine noise during these activities, and some will have back-up alarms. However, it is important to note that the equipment is not generally operated continuously, nor is the equipment always operated simultaneously and construction will only occur during daytime hours.

In order to reduce potential noise impacts during construction the following mitigation measures would be employed:

- ▶ Use of properly designed and well maintained mufflers or equivalent for all construction equipment.
- ▶ Regular equipment maintenance.
- ▶ Placement of equipment and supplies as far away from sensitive receptors as practicable.

Noise generated during construction will be short term in nature (4 to 6 months), of which Project preparation in the first 2 to 3 months would generate the most noise due to the use of heavy equipment. Noise from the Project will be removed from residential areas and mitigated by BMPs. Therefore, noise impacts during construction will be temporary and not significant. The Town of New Milford does not have a noise ordinance.

Solar PV panels from the Facility do not make any noise. The only equipment from the Facility that will generate any noise during operation will be the eight (8) inverters. The inverters will run during the day when ambient noise levels are at their highest and will not be active at night. Based on the Project's location, distance to the nearest sensitive receptor, and forested buffer areas that would remain on the subject property (atmospheric absorption), the Project would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts to surrounding areas.

3.10 Visual Environment

Visual impacts occur when changes in the landscape are noticeable to viewers looking at the landscape from homes, highways and local roadways/travel routes, and important cultural features and historic resources. Potential visual impacts were assessed based on field visits to the Project Area, review of aerial photographs of the area, and a detailed visual analysis with photographic simulations from selected representative public viewpoints.

The Facility will be located between approximate elevations 728 and 918 feet AMSL. The Project Area is bound to the west by forested areas, residences, and farm land along Candlewood Mountain Road, Candlewood Lake to the southeast, and forested areas to the north, northeast, east and south. The Project Area has historically been used for agricultural purposes (hay fields/pasture) and the interconnect parcels include existing utility corridors. The closest residence is located approximately 400 feet to the west of the Project Area on Candlewood Mountain Road. Residences south of the Project Area off of Lookout Ridge Road and Acorn Lane are approximately 910 feet from the Project Area. Candlelight Farms Inn is located approximately 695 feet, south/southwest of the Project Area off of Candlewood Mountain Road. Land surrounding the solar array location is at a much lower elevation (between approximately 250 feet to the north and 700 feet to the west and south). Candlewood Lake, located to the east, is at an elevation of approximately 429 feet.

The most prominent structures associated with the Project are the solar panel racking system, which will extend approximately 8.5 feet above the existing ground surface at their maximum height and the 7-foot tall chain link fence. A forested perimeter within the subject property would remain around the Project and provide vegetative screening between existing sensitive receptors and the proposed solar array and interconnect, consistent with existing conditions.

Representative view points from potential visual receptors with the most direct views of the Project Area were selected for detailed visual impact analysis. **Figure 16** identifies the six (6) representative selected viewpoints and their approximate location and direction, and visual simulations depicting existing conditions for all viewpoints, and proposed conditions where the

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Project would be slightly visible (locations 1 and 5) are provided below. Arrows identifying the Project location have been provided to assist in identifying the location of the proposed array.

View Point #1. Candlelight Farms Airport (Existing Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from the west side of the access road present on the west side of the runway at Candlelight Farms Airport, approximately 0.4 mile southwest of the proposed access road along Candlewood Mountain Road, facing northeast at a compass angle of 40.9 degrees true north.



View Point #1. Candlelight Farms Airport (Proposed Conditions)

The visual simulation below depicts the location and visibility of the Facility (see yellow arrow) from Candlelight Farms Airport. As depicted, the solar array will be partially visible during leaf-off conditions from this location. The existing trees located along the east side of the airport would provide screening of the view when leaves are present.



View Point #2. Millstone Ridge Beach (Existing and Proposed Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from the south end of Millstone Ridge Beach approximately 0.4 mile southeast of the southeast corner of the Facility, facing northwest at a compass angle of 311.2 degrees true north. The solar array will not be visible from this location as it would be located on the western side of the mountain, below the ridgeline.



View Point #3. Candlewood Farms (Existing and Proposed Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from Candlewood Farms on the east side of Candlewood Mountain Road across from the Candlewood Farms Inn, approximately 0.1 mile southwest of the southwest corner of the Facility, facing northeast at a compass angle of 23.0 degrees true north. The solar array will not be visible from this location due to its lower elevation and the existing trees which would remain and provide a visual buffer.



View Point #4. Lynn Deming Park (Existing and Proposed Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from the north-central portion of the beach along Candlewood Lake at Lynn Deming Park, approximately 0.3 mile east of the southeast corner of the proposed array and 0.3 mile south of the interconnection route, facing northwest at a compass angle of 293.8 degrees true north. Similar to View Point #2, the Facility will not be visible from this location as the solar array will be located on the western side of the mountain, below the ridgeline.



View Point #5. Fox Run (Existing Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from the northeast corner of the terminus of Fox Run in Sherman, Connecticut, approximately 1.0 mile west of the proposed access road along Candlewood Mountain Road, facing east at a compass angle of 80.3 degrees true north.



View Point #5. Fox Run (Proposed Conditions)

The visual simulation below depicts the location and visibility of the Facility (see yellow arrow) from the northeast terminus of Fox Run. While the solar array will be partially visible from this location during leaf-off conditions, its visibility would be significantly limited by distance. The solar array will be below the top of the Candlewood Mountain ridgeline, further reducing the visual impact. Views from inside the home shown in the photo, or from the yard around the house would be screened by existing trees, even when leaves are not present.



View Point #6. Candlewood Mountain Road (Existing and Proposed Conditions)

The photograph below was taken from the east side of Candlewood Mountain Road at Candlewood Farms, approximately 0.1 mile southwest of the southwest side of the Facility, facing northeast at a compass angle of 54.0 degrees true north. Similar to View Point #3, the solar array will not be visible from this location due to its lower elevation and the existing trees which will remain and provide a visual buffer.



Conclusions

As shown in the above photos and visual simulations, the topography of the Project Area in relation to surrounding areas and the forested nature of the Project Area will shield or obstruct the Facility from view in all directions with the exception of certain areas west of the Project Area including Candlelight Farms Airport and Fox Run, where the solar array will be slightly visible during leaf-off conditions, and at a distance such that it will not dominate the landscape views. Portions of the electrical interconnection route will be cleared; however, forested areas would surround the interconnection with the exception of the portions that traverses existing access roadways and the existing cleared fiber line ROW. As such, no adverse visual impacts are anticipated as a result of the Project.

3.11 Scenic and Recreational Areas and Community Facilities

The remaining forested buffer around the Project will provide visual and noise screening such that no scenic or recreational areas or community facilities will be adversely impacted as a result of the Project. The Project will be developed on privately owned land and will not adversely impact the Housatonic Range Trail located north of the Project Area. The Project will not generate noise or traffic during construction at levels which will impact surrounding areas. As depicted on the visual simulations in **Section 3.11**, there will be no visual impact from the identified recreation and park areas near the Project Area.

3.12 Public Health and Safety

Construction and operation of the Project will not pose any safety concerns or create a hazard to the general public.

The Facility will comply with applicable industry, State and local codes and standards. All applicable health and safety requirements relevant to electric power generation facilities will be followed during construction and operation of the Facility.

During construction of the Facility, Candlewood Solar will coordinate with local authorities regarding construction related traffic to ensure appropriate measures are undertaken to minimize the potential for Project related construction traffic conflicts with non-Project related traffic (school buses, emergency vehicles, etc.). Construction employees and contractors will receive general and Project Area specific health and safety training. Such training will cover local and State health and safety requirements; locations of local emergency care facilities, including routes; communication protocols for reporting of any health or safety issues while at the Project Area, and established lines of communication between construction personnel and local emergency responders.

The Facility will be unstaffed once operational, therefore only occasional vehicle trips to the Project Area associated with routine maintenance activities would be required following construction completion. The Facility will be completely surrounded by a 7-foot high fence to prevent unauthorized access. No raw materials would be delivered to or consumed at the Facility during operation and no fuel or hazardous materials will be stored at the Facility.

The Facility, including the solar PV panels, will be largely screened from surrounding areas due to existing mature forested buffers. The solar panels will be designed to absorb incoming solar radiation and minimize light reflected off the panels. The solar panels will be tilted towards the sky at an angle of approximately 12 degrees, further reducing the potential for solar glare to impact surrounding areas.

The Facility will be located approximately 0.5 mile from the Candlelight Farms Airport. Candlewood Solar has submitted a Form 7460 Notification of Proposed Construction to the Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") which includes a glare analysis using the Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool ("SGHAT") developed by the Sandia National Laboratory. The glare analysis shows minimal to no adverse glare impacts. The FAA submittal documentation is included as **Attachment G**.

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Figures

Attachment A

Wetlands and Watercourses Delineation Report

Attachment B

NDDB Correspondence

Attachment C

PILOT Agreement

Attachment D

Stormwater Management Report

Attachment E

SHPO Correspondence

Attachment F

Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator

Attachment G

FAA Submittal Documentation