



September 17, 2020

Town Council, Planning Board and Planner
Hopkinton Town Hall
1 Town House Road
Hopkinton, RI 02833

RE: Alternative energy installations

Dear Town Council Members, Planning Board Members and Town Planner,

The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed was designated part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in March, 2019. The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (Council) was established by the US Congress (The Dingell Act, March of 2019), to help towns and their citizens preserve, protect and enhance the special environmental, hydrological, geological, cultural and recreational values of the Watershed's rivers and tributaries. The Council is working to implement the Stewardship Plan (Plan), which was endorsed by the Hopkinton Town Council in June of 2018. As noted in the Plan, towns within this nationally recognized Watershed have the important responsibility of carefully siting new alternative energy systems. The following is in the Plan's Chapter 6, Action Strategies for the future:

Carefully site new alternative energy installations – Limit large installations to already impacted areas in the towns. Encourage updated best management practices when located in a river buffer. Develop new town ordinances to properly site installations so that they protect watersheds and forested areas.

While in principle the Stewardship Council supports solar energy as a means of providing clean energy, our primary goal is protection of National Wild and Scenic water bodies in Hopkinton through protection of the area alongside rivers and forest preservation.

In Hopkinton, the Ashaway, Pawcatuck and Wood Rivers as well as the Brushy, Canonchet, Glade and Tomaquag Brooks are covered under the Wild and Scenic Designation.

Alternative energy installation sites should be planned to minimize any disturbance within the recommended ¼ mile area alongside those water bodies and address any potential impacts to the Wild and Scenic River Values through appropriate mitigation measures and controls.

Attached is a map illustrating the ¼ mile area for review of impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers. Site plans should address run-off from the panels and surrounding area during and after construction and consider seasonal and temporal factors. Stormwater plans should assure all residues or sediments are captured and do not reach water bodies untreated. Appropriate scenic buffers should be addressed to retain the existing scenic value of the surroundings either by maintaining the natural vegetation where possible and/or including additional buffers (planted, man-made) where needed. Wildlife habitat protection should be maximized. The goal is for applications to assess potential impact to Wild and Scenic Values, the values include Exceptional Ecosystems, Scenic/Recreation, Hydrology/Geology and Cultural.

Why is protecting an area alongside rivers important?

- Prevent stormwater pollutants, including erosion of sediment from the site, from entering and degrading the water quality of the waterways
- Maintain Classification of water quality as B (all recreation and aquatic/terrestrial life support uses except drinking water supply)
- Preserve habitat for rare and endangered species native to RI

Both Rhode Island and Connecticut State Wildlife Action Plans describe large tracts of unfragmented forested land as being of special importance to protecting wildlife. Land within Voluntown, North Stonington, and the northwest portion of Hopkinton comprise essential unfragmented habitat.

<http://wpwildrivers.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Unfragmented-habitat-cores.pdf>

Why is forest preservation important?

- Contiguous forest patches and unique wetlands in the watershed provide critical habitat for 50% of RI's and southern CT's rare and endangered species
- Highly forested areas form a resilient and biologically significant landscape-scale ecosystem that is rare, if not unique, in the highly developed coastal region stretching from Washington D.C. to Boston.

On a very positive note, we acknowledge the success of the Hopkinton municipal Land Trust in the recent acquisition of an Open Space Grant. It is very encouraging that the state allocated a large sum of money for a conservation easement of 120 acres alongside a

designated Wild and Scenic Tributary, the Tomaquag Brook. We highly commend the efforts taken to identify this parcel (Plat 5-1), which is adjacent to other preserved lands and offers environmental and recreational values. The Wild and Scenic Values align directly with the well established list of objectives the Hopkinton Land Trust seeks to accomplish.
<http://www.hltri.org/about.html>

The Council along with the twelve towns contained in the National Wild and Scenic River System have a shared responsibility to ensure continued protection of this area for future generations. The Council strongly encourages Hopkinton officials and boards to consider using the recommended ¼ mile area for review of impacts to Wild and Scenic Values for river and forest preservation when reviewing solar and other development proposals that may adversely impact the National Wild and Scenic River System. We'd be glad to help by providing research on how Wild and Scenic Rivers are protected in the region, and help in other ways as possible.

Sincerely,



Jon Ericson,
Chairperson,
Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers
Stewardship Council



Kassi Donnelly (Archambault),
Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator,
Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers
Stewardship Council
203 Arcadia Road
Hope Valley, RI 02832
(401)-539-9017
WPWildRivers@wpwa.org

CC: Elaine Caldarone,
Hopkinton appointed Town Representative,
Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Harvey Buford,
Chair
Hopkinton Conservation Commission