



**Wood-Pawcatuck Wild & Scenic Rivers
Stewardship Council**
203 Arcadia Road
Hope Valley, RI 02832
401-539-9017

March 2, 2021

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

RE: 'Stone Ridge at Hopkinton' Photovoltaic Solar Energy System Master Plan

Dear Planning Board Members and Town Planner,

The Wood Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) wishes to inform you of our interest in the siting of the proposed 'Stone Ridge at Hopkinton' Photovoltaic Solar Energy System (PSES).

The seven major rivers of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed and their tributaries were designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers by Congress in March 2019. Canonchet Brook, which abuts the proposed 'Stone Ridge at Hopkinton' PSES site, is one of the federally designated tributaries in this river system. The Stewardship Council has a responsibility to preserve, protect and enhance the special environmental, cultural and recreational values of the Rivers.

The Stewardship Plan (Plan) was adopted by the Hopkinton Town Council and supported by Hopkinton's Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Land Trust. The Stewardship Council is charged with implementing the Plan which recognizes that the siting of solar energy facilities may have adverse impacts on the remarkable values provided by the existing watershed and provides guidance for siting such facilities. The Plan counsels that a town should "carefully site new alternative energy installations" and limit large installations to already impacted areas in the towns. (p. 146)

This is a large installation. We ask you to consider whether the proposed site is appropriate in light of the Stewardship Plan's guidance. We have the following concerns about permitting this proposal to move forward:

- Destruction of forest cover: Forests serve as natural filters and are the most effective land cover for maintenance of water quality and quantity, providing a quantifiable economic benefit by filtering sediments and other pollutants from the water in the soil before it reaches a water source. Large tracts of intact forested land are particularly valuable to preserve. Tree cutting should be avoided to the maximum extent possible.
- Protection of Canonchet Brook: any project should be designed so as to maintain a quarter mile of primarily undisturbed, naturally vegetated buffer around Canonchet Brook. (See Appendix I: Map).

Should the PSES Master Plan be approved by the Planning Board, we encourage the Planning Board, in addition to minimizing disturbance within the ¼ mile area alongside Canonchet Brook, to address any

potential impacts to the Wild and Scenic River values through appropriate mitigation measures and controls. Site plans should address run-off from the site and surrounding area during and after construction considering seasonal and temporal factors. Storm water plans should assure all residues and/or sediments are captured and do not reach water bodies. Water quality of Canonchet Brook should be monitored frequently prior to, during, and after construction of the PSES. If the water quality tests indicate a negative trend the developer should be required to take measures to prevent further water quality degradation. We can provide the Planning Board with further guidance as to frequency and type of water sampling if desired. Appropriate scenic buffers should be detailed in the PSES Master Plan to blend with the existing scenic value of the surroundings either by maintaining the natural vegetation where possible and/or including additional buffers, strategically planted and selected, where needed to screen the entire PSES site. In addition, wildlife habitat protection should be maximized by minimizing forest clearance and stone wall removal.

The Stewardship Council notes that neither the town engineering review, the land use planning consultant nor the wildlife habitat assessment addressed the National Wild and Scenic Rivers status of the watershed and of Canonchet Brook. By adopting the Stewardship Plan, the Hopkinton Town Council expressed the town's desire to protect what have been designated outstandingly remarkable values of the brook and surrounding watershed. To that end, the applicant should be responsible for assessing the potential impacts of its project on those Wild and Scenic values and make every effort to avoid or diminish them.

We are grateful to partner with the town of Hopkinton in recognizing and preserving the irreplaceable landscapes and natural environment of our area. The Stewardship Council can provide further support and expertise in pursuit of our mutual goals as needed. Thank you for consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

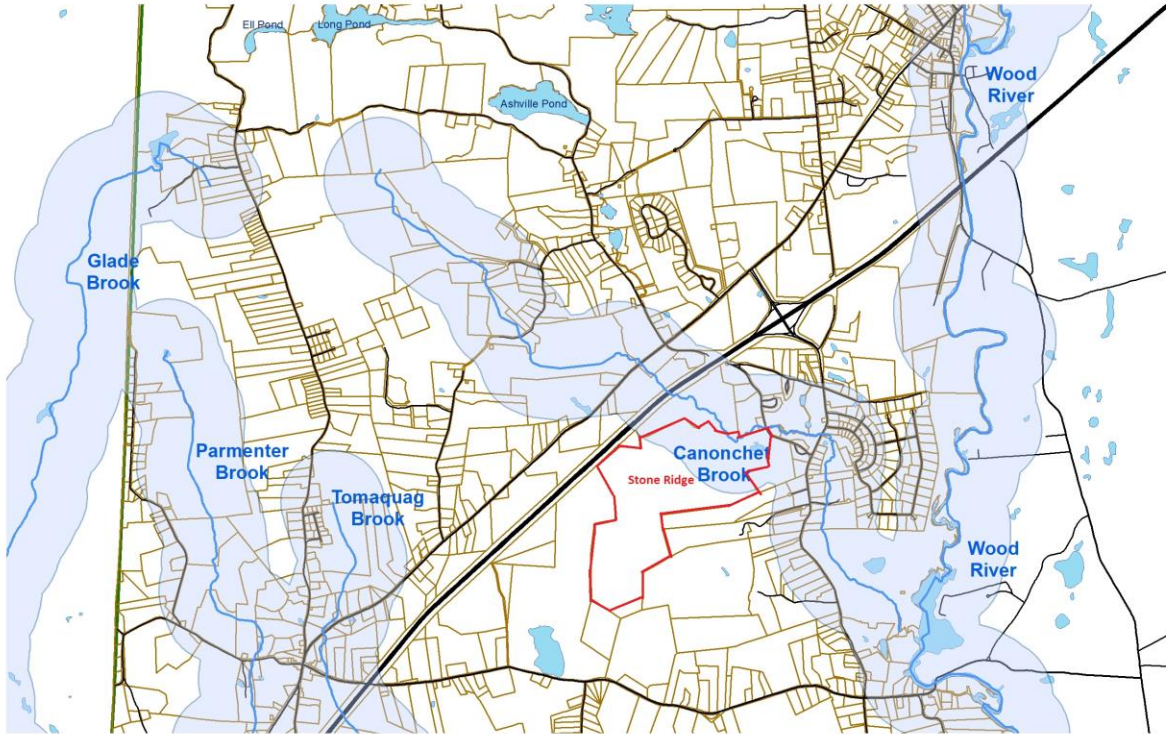
Jon F. Ericson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon F. Ericson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Chair, Wood Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

WPWildRivers@wpwa.org

Appendix I: Map



Hopkinton, RI

Wood-Pawcatuck Wild & Scenic Rivers:
 Wood River, Pawcatuck River, Ashaway River,
 Brushy Brook, Canonchet Brook, Glade Brook,
 Parmenter Brook, Tomaquag Brook

Data credits: Hopkinton, RI GIS; [RI GIS](#)
 Map Author: Elise Torello 12/21/20

