

August 9, 2002

Mr. Joel Rinebold
Executive Director
Institute for Sustainable Energy
83 Windham Street
Willimantic CT 06226

Via electronic mail and US Postal Service

Re: Docket No. 02-04-23—Working Group / Bethel-Norwalk Transmission Line

Dear Mr. Rinebold:

The Connecticut Fund for the Environment (“CFE”) submits the attached document in response to your request for preliminary, brief (one- to three-page) position papers from Working Group members to summarize concerns pertaining to the above-referenced matter. The position paper was drafted by CFE’s representative on the Working Group, Ms. Pat Sesto. Please contact Ms. Sesto at (203) 563-0180, or me at (203) 787-0646, ext. 106, if you have questions about this material. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Penny H. Anthopolos
CFE Staff Attorney

**Preliminary Position Paper of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment,
Member of the Working Group—Bethel-Norwalk Transmission Line**

By Pat Sesto, CFE Working Group Representative

It is the Connecticut Fund for the Environment's goal to evaluate and recommend options to provide a reasonable quantity of power to the southwestern region of Connecticut without unduly compromising the environment or quality of life in the host communities. There is general consensus that the existing 115kV line is inadequate in and of itself to meet the growing consumer demand. However, there is no consensus regarding the true power needs or the best methodology to meet the need. The plan before the Siting Council for a 345kV line to be strung within the existing, but widened, right-of-way is not a simple undertaking, and the application represents only one of multiple phases of this project. In the absence of a realistic need determination, investigation of alternative sources, and a demand reduction plan, I am unconvinced that the environmental and social impacts of the 345kV plan are warranted.

The Connecticut Fund for the Environment's chief concern is the environmental impacts of any plan proposed to meet the region's need. This region is a densely developed part of the State that cannot afford unjustified impacts to our remaining natural resources. Any impacts to these resources that may be necessary must be made reverently and after careful consideration of alternatives that would avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

In order to minimize impacts to these valued resources, there needs to be a comprehensive evaluation of the various methods and strategies to meet the region's power demands. The Connecticut Fund for the Environment looks forward to learning about alternate power sources, understanding their advantages and limitations, and evaluating their potential use in the region. Additionally, CFE is committed to the notion that there is no obligation to meet an insatiable demand for power. Conservation in various forms must be part of any recommendation put forth by the Working Group.

Additionally, the role of the Siting Council cannot be overlooked within the Working Group's review process. As CFE's representative on the Working Group, my exposure to date has left me disillusioned with the application process and the caliber of material acceptable in making application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need. The Connecticut General Statutes themselves appear to be thoughtful and balanced in their purpose and charge to the Siting Council. Conversely, as evidenced by the Bethel-Norwalk 345kV proposal, an application for a Certificate can be made with substandard supporting documentation and still be considered acceptable for review as judged by the Siting Council. The theory as it has been explained to me is that detailed information regarding project construction methodology, environmental impacts, and mitigation is provided as part of the Development and Management Plan, after the Certificate is issued. How can a regulatory body make the determination of whether or not the project justifies the impacts when the impacts are unknown? What happens if the details of the D&M reveal significant impacts? To my knowledge no Certificate has been revoked or expired because a satisfactory D&M could not be crafted. It is improper that the question is no longer *whether* the project should go forward, but *how* the project will go forward.

A second element within the Siting Council review process that concerns the Connecticut Fund for the Environment is the piecemeal fashion that applications are made to the Council without full disclosure of the overall project. The phased-application approach provides a skewed view of the overall environmental impacts and the ultimate quantity of electricity and reliability a complete project can bring. With regard to the 345 kV line, the Bethel to Norwalk portion is one of three phases, and indeed it is the shortest overland piece. If this were to be approved, it is logical that Phase II would also be favorably received regardless of the environmental impacts. Although the application does not include Phase II, the Phase II application is imminent since the need to "complete the loop" has been promoted by the applicant. Also included in the broad project is Phase III, the plan to cross Long Island Sound out of Norwalk. Again, the applicant has referenced this phase as part of the overall project, yet has chosen not to make it part of the current application. In addition to the unknown cumulative environmental

impacts of the multiple phases, the piecemeal approach breeds skepticism regarding the motivation for the proposed project and suspicion concerning the application's statements of need.

The Working Group provides an excellent forum to gather a broad spectrum of information covering transmission, generation, and conservation options, and the potential natural resources impacts that are associated with these options. Further, the Working Group should evaluate the application process of the Siting Council for the purpose of making recommendations that would provide for more comprehensive review of a total project and its impacts, prior to issuing the Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need.