



STEVEN ENGLEBRIGHT
4th Assembly District
Suffolk County

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March 27, 2017

LIPA Board of Trustees
333 Earle Ovington Blvd
Uniondale, NY 11553

Dear Members of the LIPA Board of Trustees,

I write to add my voice to the broad opposition to the 350-acre utility-scale solar installation proposed for the National Grid property in Shoreham, NY. This proposal would necessitate the destruction of 43% of an 800 acre forest which is a key old growth coastal forest on the Long Island Sound. This parcel is a museum piece of our island's natural history heritage and the important ecological and natural system benefits provided by a contiguous coastal forest of this size and quality are immense.

In the 2016 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, the Shoreham property was identified as an acquisition priority project because of its location within the boundaries of the federally designated Long Island Sound Estuary, including more than one mile of forested coastal bluffs fronting the Long Island Sound. Acquisitions are rated based on their ability to protect ground and surface water quality, improve coastal resiliency, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and support water-based industry and tourism.

The reason why this grand woodland exists at all is that is situated on rugged glacially-derived morainal sediments that were too steep to cultivate as farmland. To make this land suitable for solar panels would necessitate the creation of the largest cut and fill grading project in Long Island's history.

I commend LIPA on its strong efforts to integrate renewable energy into its power generation portfolio but we must not destroy the natural environment in our pursuit of renewable generation opportunities in the service area.

My record is clear as one of the leading proponents for renewable energy in the State Legislature and as the original prime sponsor of the Solar Choice Act of 1996 which laid the groundwork for solar energy generation in New York State. I was also the prime sponsor of the law that created wind net-metering as well as the law that expanded solar net-metering to all utility customer classes. I am the prime sponsor of the Climate Change and Community Protection Act – legislation which would put into statute the Governor's clean energy goals.

I strongly support solar power generation but I reject the calculus that permits tearing down ecosystems and destroying carbon-sequestering woodlands that also provide a host of other ecosystem services to place photovoltaic systems to reduce carbon emissions. It is a false choice to say that we must destroy nature to save our environment. Before we are reduced to liquidating our natural history heritage, we need to have a formal, prioritized strategy for the placement of solar with the goal of utilizing already cleared, developed or disturbed areas – vacant industrial areas, brownfields, commercial rooftops, parking lots, train station roof tops, railroad and power line right of ways, and highway medians. It is my understanding that Sustainable CUNY will be releasing its Solar Mapping of Long Island using data points from LiDAR in April 2017.

This project is opposed by numerous State and local elected officials including the Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, the Town Councilperson from the 2nd District, the County Legislator, as well as the Shoreham Wading River School District (which voted unanimously to oppose), the Shoreham Civic Association, the Wading River Civic Association, and the Pine Barrens Society. In addition, the Shoreham Wading River School District and the Pine Barrens Society have rejected multi-million dollar community benefit offers from the developer.

As you review the proposals to your RFP, I ask that you consider the irreparable damage this proposal would do to this high quality, old growth woodland – one of the last of its size on Long Island. Before we consider solar on ecologically significant ecosystem, we should at the least have a comprehensive study of available sites for solar placement and a prioritized list to work from.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Englebright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S".

Steve Englebright