

**STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Petition of Savage Solar Energy LLC for a	)	
Certificate of Public Good, pursuant to 30	)	
V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the installation	)	
and operation of a 2.75 MW solar electric	)	Case No. 26-0540-PET
generation facility off Route 103 in Chester,	)	
Vermont	)	

PETITIONER SAVAGE SOLAR ENERGY LLC'S
PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT AND ORDER

August 7, 2026

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I. List of Materials in Evidence (all parties)

The following items were admitted into evidence and make up the record in this matter.

Savage Solar Energy LLC
Prefiled Direct Testimony of Thomas Hand (03/23/2026)
SSE-TH-1: Hand Resume
SSE-TH-2: Site Plans
SSE-TH-3: Representative Equipment Specifications
SSE-TH-4: Decommissioning Plan
SSE-TH-5: Feasibility Study
Prefiled Direct Testimony of Seth Goddard (03/23/2026)
SSE-SG-1: Goddard Resume
SSE-SG-2: Sound Study
Prefiled Direct Testimony of Michael Lew-Smith (03/23/2026)
SSE-MLS-1: Lew-Smith Resume
SSE-MLS-2: Natural Resources Report
Prefiled Direct Testimony of Jeremy Owens (03/23/2026)
SSE-JO-1: Owens Resume
SSE-JO-2: Aesthetic Assessment and Orderly Development Report
SSE-JO-2 Appendix A: Maps
SSE-JO-2 Appendix B: Photographic Inventory
SSE-JO-2 Appendix C: Landscape Mitigation Plan
SSE-JO-2 Appendix D: Regional and Town Plan Excerpts
SSE-VDHP-1: Memorandum of Understanding between Savage Solar Energy and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
SSE-AAFM-1: Stipulation between Savage Solar Energy and the Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets
SSE-ANR-1: Memorandum of Understanding between Savage Solar Energy and the Agency of Natural Resources
DPS Comments (07/24/2026)
DPS Determination Under 30 V.S.A. § 202(f)
Affidavits of Seth Goddard, Michael Lew-Smith, Jeremy Owens and Thomas Hand

II. Introduction

This docket concerns a Petition filed by Savage Solar Energy LLC (“SSE” or “Petitioner”), pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248 and Rule 5.400 of the Public Utility Commission (“Commission” or “PUC”), requesting the Commission to issue a Certificate of Public Good (“CPG”) for the installation and operation of a 2.75 megawatt (MW) solar electric generation facility to be located east of Vermont Route 103 in the town of Chester, Vermont, known as the “Savage Solar Project” (the “Project”). The Commission has reviewed the materials filed by the Petitioner and approves the petition as follows.

III. Procedural History

On March 23, 2026, the Petitioner filed a petition with supporting testimony and exhibits (the “Petition”) requesting a CPG to install and operate a 2.75 MW solar electric generation facility in Chester, Vermont.

On April 1, 2026, the Commission issued a memorandum finding the Petition administratively complete.

On May 5, 2026, a scheduling conference was held, and the Commission set a schedule for the proceeding. Appearances were entered by Victoria Westgate, Esq., and Zachary Berger, Esq., SRH Law PLLC, on behalf of Savage Solar Energy LLC; Matthew Bakerpoole, Esq., Vermont Department of Public Service (“DPS”); Kimberly Johnson, Esq., Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (“ANR”); and WillyJane Patry, Esq., Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (“AAFM”).

On April 29, 2026, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (“VDHP”) filed a Notice of Intervention. On May 27, 2026, the Commission granted permissive intervention to VDHP.

On May 18, 2026, AAFM and DPS filed discovery requests which SSE responded to on June 5, 2026.

On June 17, 2026, the Hearing Officer issued a request for information, which SSE responded to on June 18, 2026.

On June 18, 2026, Petitioner filed a Memorandum of Understanding between Petitioner and VDHP (“VDHP MOU”).

On July 24, 2026, Petitioner filed a Stipulation between Petitioner and AAFM (“AAFM Stipulation”) and a Memorandum of Understanding between Petitioner and ANR (“ANR MOU”).

On July 24, 2026, the Department filed comments on the Project and on July 28, 2026 filed a Section 202(f) Determination letter. The Department recommends that the Petition be approved without further hearing or investigation.

On August 7, 2026, SSE filed its Proposed Findings of Fact and Order and a Proposed CPG.

On ____, 2026, the Commission entered the prefiled testimony and exhibits into the evidentiary record.

IV. Position of Other Parties in the Proceeding

SSE and VDHP entered into the VDHP MOU on June 15th, 2026. The VDHP MOU includes proposed CPG conditions related to the Project's effect on above-ground historic structures, districts, and landscapes. VDHP has no concerns with the indirect effects on historical standing structures around the Project area, and it is VDHP's opinion that the Project will cause no adverse effects to above-ground historic resources. Exh. SSE-VDHP-1. The VDHP MOU includes proposed CPG conditions related to the protection of below ground archaeological resources, all of which are included in the Final Order and CPG now entered by the Commission. Exh. SSE-VDHP-1.

SSE and ANR entered into the ANR MOU on July 24, 2026. The SSE-ANR MOU includes proposed CPG conditions related to site preparation, construction, decommissioning and obtaining ANR stormwater and wetlands permits, all of which are included in the Final Order and CPG now entered by the Commission. The ANR MOU states that, subject to compliance with the conditions contained therein, ANR agrees that the Project will avoid an undue adverse effect on the natural environment and the use of natural resources under Section 248(b)(5), with due consideration having been given to the criteria specified in 10 V.S.A. §§ 1424a(d) and 6086(a)(1) through (8) and greenhouse gas impacts. Exh. SSE-ANR-1.

SSE and AAFM entered into the AAFM Stipulation dated July 24, 2026. The AAFM Stipulation includes proposed CPG conditions related to site preparation and construction, and soil stockpiling practices, all of which are included in the Final Order and CPG now entered by the Commission. The SSE-AAFM MOU states that, subject to compliance with the above

conditions, AAFM agrees that the Project as described in the plans and specifications submitted with the Petition will not have an undue adverse effect on primary agricultural soils under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5). Exh. SSE-AAFM-1.

On July 24, 2026, DPS filed comments finding that the Project does not raise a significant issue with respect to the statutory criteria traditionally subject to DPS's review and that the Project will promote the public good. DPS has requested that Petitioner make a supplemental filing identifying the Project's final inverter selection once determined. DPS also filed a Section 202(f) determination that the Project is consistent with the Vermont Electric Plan.

No other parties participated in the proceeding.

V. Proposed Findings of Fact

Based on the Petition and the associated prefiled testimony and exhibits, and the absence of any factual disputes, this matter is ready for decision. Based on the substantial evidence of record, the Hearing Officer hereby reports the following findings to the Commission in accordance with 30 V.S.A. § 8(c).

A. General Findings

Project Description

1. SSE is a Vermont limited liability company with principal offices at 170 Bonnet Street, Manchester Center, Vermont 05255. Petition for CPG.
2. SSE proposes to construct and operate a 2.75 megawatt (MW) (AC) solar electric generation project, to be known as the Savage Solar Project ("Project"), located off of Vermont Route 103 in Chester, Vermont (the "Property"). Hand pf. at 2.

3. The nameplate capacity for the Project is 2.75 MW AC. The expected net energy output of the Project is 5,000 ($\pm$) megawatt hours of electricity (MWh) per year. This is the equivalent of the annual electricity consumption of roughly 770 homes, based on average residential use of approximately 6,500 kWh per year. Hand pf. at 5.
4. SSE intends to sell the Project's outputs – energy, capacity, and Renewable Energy Credits ("RECs") – through a power purchase agreement ("PPA") between SSE and Green Mountain Power ("GMP"). Hand pf. at 13-14.
5. The Project will be sited on 14.18 ($\pm$) acres on a parcel totaling 25.72 ($\pm$) acres. SSE has the option to lease the Project area. Hand pf. at 2.
6. Access to the Project site will make use of the existing roads within the area, and a new access driveway off of Route 103. The gravel driveway will be approximately 250 feet long and 12-foot-wide. Hand pf. at 3; exh. SSE-TH-2.
7. The Project will interconnect with GMP's existing distribution line along Route 103. Hand pf. at 4; exh. SSE-TH-2.
8. The Project will be set back approximately 162' from Route 103, the closest traveled way, and approximately 188' from the nearest off-site residence. Hand pf. at 3; exh. SSE-TH-2.
9. The Project complies with the property line and public road setback requirements set forth in 30 V.S.A. § 248(s). Hand pf. at 28; exh. SSE-TH-2.
10. The Project's equipment consists of the following: 7,200 solar panels of 590 watts each ($\pm$), or the equivalent, mounted on fixed tilt racking; 10 CPS inverters rated at 229 kW and two rated at 230 kW (AC) each for a maximum capacity of 2,750 kW AC; one 3,000 kVA pad-

mounted transformer; equipment pads and/or racks, and above- and below-ground electrical lines from the array to the GMP distribution system. Hand pf. at 3-4; exh. SSE-TH-2; exh. SSE-TH-3.

11. Five new utility poles will be installed along the access drive off Route 103. Hand pf. at 4; exh. SSE-TH-2.

12. The Project will interconnect to the GMP distribution system at the final new utility pole closest to Route 103. Hand pf. at 4; exh. SSE-TH-2.

13. The Project will be enclosed within a fixed knot, game-style fence that will be a minimum of 7' high in order to meet the National Electric Safety Code. The fencing will be secured and kept relatively close to ground level to avoid access by large wildlife and to prevent access to the Project. Hand pf. at 4; exh. SSE-TH-2; exh. SSE-TH-3.

14. All switchgear equipment will be inside a locked UL-listed, code-approved electrical enclosure. Hand pf. at 24.

15. The transformer will be installed with a secondary containment structure capable of holding 110 percent of the volume of oil in the transformer plus a minimum of five inches of freeboard so that the surrounding land and water resources would be protected in the unlikely event that any transformer fluid leaks from the transformer. Additionally, the transformer will use a non-toxic, biodegradable cooling oil. Hand pf. at 25; exh. SSE-TH-2.

16. The transformer and switchgear equipment area will be raised to ensure the bottom of all electrical equipment is at least one foot above the base flood elevation ("BFE") level. Solar panels, inverters and electrical enclosures will be mounted such that they are at least one foot above the BFE at their bottom edge. Hand pf. at 4; exh. SSE-TH-2.

17. The inverter racks will be surrounded by an eight-foot high fence with sound attenuating blankets. Goddard pf. at 4.

18. Construction of the Project is expected to take approximately 30 to 40 weeks following receipt of all necessary regulatory approvals due to time of year restrictions proposed for certain construction related activities. Hand pf. at 8.

19. Construction activities for the Project will be limited to the hours between 7:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, and between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. on Saturdays, as needed. Construction will not occur on state or federal holidays or Sundays unless authorized by the Commission upon request. Goddard pf. at 3.

20. The operation of the Project is totally automatic and requires no on-site personnel. The Project will be continually monitored via the internet to confirm proper operation and performance. Energy metering will also be accomplished by remote telemetry. Hand pf. at 8.

21. On-site maintenance activities will include periodic vegetation management, snow removal in winter to provide access to the Project as needed, annual equipment and wiring inspections, and maintenance of Project equipment on an as-needed basis. Hand pf. at 9.

Decommissioning

22. At the end of the Project's expected useful life, a determination will be made whether the Project can be re-powered (after any necessary regulatory approval), or whether it will be decommissioned and the site restored. Hand pf. at 12.

23. At the time the Project is decommissioned, the Project equipment will be dismantled and removed from the site and sold, re-used, recycled, and/or disposed of in accordance with applicable waste laws and regulations in existence at that time. The site will be restored to its

condition prior to installation of the Project to the greatest extent practicable. Hand pf. at 12; exh. SSE-TH-4.

24. SSE's Decommissioning Plan outlines the decommissioning process and provides an estimate of the cost of decommissioning the Project. The decommissioning fund will be in place prior to beginning site preparation or construction and secured with an approved form of decommissioning security. Hand pf. at 12; exh. SSE-TH-4.

25. SSE's decommissioning plan includes a proposed form of surety bond to fund the decommissioning fund. Hand pf. at 12; exh. SSE-TH-4.

26. On July 24, 2026, DPS filed comments stating that SSE's proposed Decommissioning Plan and Fund is reasonable and includes an acceptable form of security.

B. Section 248 Criteria

Orderly Development of the Region – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1)

27. The Project will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region and will not cause any direct impacts on the capacity of the region to develop. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

28. The Project will not violate any specific land conservation measures contained in the Mount Ascutney Regional Planning Commission ("MARPC") Regional Plan, the Regional Energy Plan or the Chester Town Plan. Owens pf. at 6-7; exh. SSE-JO-2.

29. The MARPC Regional Plan does not contain any specific land conservation measures or policies that would be affected by the Project. The Project also supports policies within the Regional Energy Plan by helping advance development of renewable energy generation to meet

production targets. The Project is not located in protected or otherwise described conservation areas or open space, and the Project would avoid undue adverse impacts to significant natural communities and sites. Owens pf. at 7; exh. SSE-JO-2; SSE-TH-2; SSE-MLS-2.

30. The Project's proposed landscape screening and existing natural screening reduce visibility of the Project, as envisioned in the MARPC Regional Plan and Town Plan. Owens pf. at 7-8; exh. SSE-JO-2.

31. There are no specific land conservation measures in the Town Plan that would be affected by the Project, and the Project is not located in protected or otherwise described conservation areas or open space. Owens pf. at 7-8; exh. SSE-JO-2.

32. The MARPC Regional Plan, Regional Energy Plan and Town Plan do not identify the Project area as having specific limitations, planned conservation measures, or being unsuitable for solar development. Based on this review, the plans do not contain land conservation measures or specific policies that apply to or would be impacted by the Project and the Project will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region. Owens pf. at 8; exh. SSE-JO-2.

Need for the Project – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(2)

33. The Project is needed to meet demand for renewable energy generation in the region and in Vermont and may help to meet the renewable energy goals in the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan. Hand pf. at 13.

34. GMP's Load Forecast shows significant growth in retail electric sales beginning in 2022 and continuing until at least 2041, in all scenarios (low, base and high growth). The Project is needed to meet this demand. Hand pf. at 13.

35. The Project has entered into a PPA with GMP. Hand pf. at 14.

36. By selling RECs from the Project to GMP, the Project will also directly help Vermont achieve renewable energy targets identified in the State Energy Plan, such as the goal of obtaining 75 percent of the state's total energy needs from renewable sources by 2032. Hand pf. at 13-14.

System Stability and Reliability – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(3)

37. The Project will not adversely affect system stability and reliability. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

38. GMP completed a feasibility interconnection study ("Feasibility Study"), dated April 12, 2023. Hand pf. at 14; exh. SSE-TH-5.

39. The Feasibility Study concluded that the Project can move forward without a System Impact Study provided that a specified list of minor system upgrades and other requirements are implemented. Hand pf. at 14-15; exh. SSE-TH-5.

40. Distribution upgrades include installation of a pole mounted recloser and metering package at the project PCC, installation by GMP of a recloser block scheme for the CH-G11 circuit at the substation, and upgrades to approximately 579' of existing distribution line along Route 103. Hand pf. at 15; exh. SSE-TH-5.

41. Except for the existing line upgrades, which GMP plans to upgrade as part of a separate Zero Outage Initiative project, the costs of any electrical system modifications required to interconnect the Project to the GMP system will be borne by SSE and these improvements will be completed prior to interconnection. Hand pf. at 15.

Economic Benefit to the State – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(4)

42. The Project will provide an economic benefit to the State. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

43. The Project will provide a range of economic benefits for the State and its residents, including employment opportunities and municipal and state tax payments. Hand pf. at 16.

44. During the development and construction phases, SSE will retain (directly or through contractors) dozens of Vermont-based firms and individuals to work on engineering, environmental, aesthetic, legal/permitting, and construction-related tasks when commercially feasible. During the operations phase, several individuals employed by SSE and its contractors will be involved in operating, maintaining, and monitoring the Project. Hand pf. at 16-17.

45. SSE will also pay state property taxes for the Project that are expected to be \$11,000 (\$4/kW) per year, and approximately \$18,000 per year in municipal taxes. Hand pf. at 16-17.

46. The Project will be economically beneficial to Vermont by generating renewable energy at a stabilized price through a long term PPA between SSE and GMP. Hand pf. at 17.

Aesthetics, Historic Sites, Air and Water Purity, the Natural Environment, and Public Health and Safety – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)

47. The Project, subject to conditions, will not have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, the natural environment, the use of natural resources, and public health and safety, with due consideration having been given to the criteria specified in 10 V.S.A. §§ 1424a(d) and 6086(a)(1) through (8) and (9)(K), and greenhouse gas impacts. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

Outstanding Resource Waters – 10 V.S.A. § 1424a(d)

48. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on Outstanding Resource Waters. No Outstanding Resource Waters will intersect the Project and as such the Project will not affect any segment of any Outstanding Resource Waters. Lew-Smith pf. at 8; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Air Pollution – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)

49. The Project will not result in undue air pollution due to dust or other air pollutants. Hand pf. at 18.

50. The proposed construction of the Project would result in temporary emission of minimal levels of air pollutants. These emissions would primarily be generated by typical construction equipment and would not result in any permanent increase in hydrocarbon emissions. Hand pf. at 18.

51. The proposed operation of the Project will not directly emit any air pollutants and will only result in infrequent and minimal emissions associated with maintenance operations (e.g. periodic field mowing of grass). These temporary and infrequent emissions will not cause undue air pollution. Hand pf. at 18.

52. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact due to noise. Goddard pf. at 3; exh. SSE-SG-2.

53. The sound generated by the Project construction will be of limited duration and will be comparable to the sound generated by light construction equipment. Goddard pf. at 3.

54. During operation of the Project, the only components that generate sound that may be audible from off-site locations (i.e., beyond the Project parcel) are the transformer and inverters.

An 8' tall perimeter fence with acoustic attenuation blankets will be installed around the inverters. Goddard pf. at 3.

55. The maximum Project-related sound levels at the nearest residence are estimated to be approximately 41 dBA (daytime) and 28 dBA (nighttime). Goddard pf. at 4; exh. SSE-SG-2.

56. The Project's estimated noise levels during both daytime and nighttime are consistent with other similar projects previously approved by the Commission. Based on these estimated sound levels, there will not be an undue adverse impact as a result of noise generated by the Project's operation. Goddard pf. at 4; exh. SSE-SG-2.

Water Pollution – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)

57. The Project will not result in undue water pollution. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

58. The Project is designed so that it will not have an undue adverse effect on and/or is not located near any outstanding resource waters, headwater areas, floodways or flood fringes, stream banks, or shorelines. The Project will not require the use of water for its construction or operation phases (other than water that might be used for dust suppression, which will be brought to the site if needed), and will not result in water disposal. Hand pf. at 19.

59. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact with regard to any of the water-related criteria discussed below. Lew-Smith pf. at 3-5; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

60. The transformer will be installed with a secondary containment structure capable of holding 110 percent of the volume of oil plus a minimum of five inches of freeboard so that the surrounding land and water resources would be protected in the unlikely event that transformer

fluid leaks from the transformer. Additionally, the transformer will use a non-toxic, biodegradable cooling oil. Hand pf. at 25; exh. SSE-TH-2.

Headwaters – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(A)

61. The Project will have no adverse impact on headwater areas. Lew-Smith pf. at 4-5; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

62. The Project is not located within a headwater. Regardless, the Project will meet all applicable health and environmental water quality regulations and will not result in a reduction in quality of ground or surface waters in the area. Lew-Smith pf. at 3-4; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Waste Disposal – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(B)

63. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact with regard to waste disposal. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

64. Project operations will not generate solid waste, will not involve the injection of waste materials into groundwater or wells, and will not generate sanitary waste. Goddard pf. at 5.

65. As there will be no buildings associated with the Project, no on-site wastewater disposal system is required for the Project and thus a Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Permit is not required.

66. Any metal or cardboard generated from the Project construction will be recycled. All construction waste that cannot be recycled will be disposed of in an approved sanitary landfill. During operation of the Project, there are no anticipated activities that will generate waste materials requiring disposal. Goddard pf. at 5.

67. Tree trunks and large limbs will be removed from the site and utilized for firewood, while smaller woody debris will be ground into chips and utilized in the stabilization practices

around the site. All stumps removed from the site will be disposed of in an approved stump dump facility. Goddard pf. at 6.

**Water Conservation, Sufficiency of Water Supply, and
Burden on Existing Water Supply – 10 V.S.A. §§ 6086(a)(1)(C), (a)(2), (a)(3)**

68. The Project may use a small amount of water during the construction phase if required for dust control and for occasional cleaning of panels during Project operations. In both instances, any small amount of water needed will be brought to the site. Otherwise, the Project will not utilize any water supplies (on-site or off-site) during construction or operation and will not require connection to a well or municipal water supply. Goddard pf. at 6-7. As a result, the Project will not have an undue adverse impact on water conservation, sufficiency of supply, or place an adverse burden on water supply. Goddard pf. at 6.

Floodways – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(D)

69. The majority of the Project area, except for a section of the access road, is located within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) Special Flood Hazard Area. However, the Project is not located in the FEMA floodway or ANR river corridor. Goddard pf. at 10.

70. The Project design has been coordinated with the Vermont Watershed Management Division and has obtained a Flood Hazard Area and River Corridor (“FHARC”) Permit (#FP-8-0031-GP). The Permit authorizes the Project to be located within the 100-year floodplain, provided that all solar modules and electrical equipment are installed a minimum of 1’ above the base flood elevation and outside the regulatory floodway, which they are. Goddard pf. at 10-11; exh. SSE-TH-2.

71. With the mitigation design features described above, the Project will not interfere with flood flows or adversely affect floodplain storage. For this reason, the Project will not have any undue adverse impacts on floodways, floodway fringes, or river corridors, nor will it endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public or riparian owners as it relates to flood events or fluvial erosion. Goddard pf. at 11.

Streams – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(E)

72. The Project is located near two streams. A tributary to the Williams River is located approximately 50' west of the Project area, and the Williams River is located approximately 125' east of the Project area. Lew-Smith pf. at 4; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

73. The Project has been designed to avoid impacts to these streams and their associated riparian buffer zones. The Project will not result in any clearing of forest vegetation within the riparian buffer zones. As a result, the Project will not have an undue adverse impact on streams. Lew-Smith pf. at 4; exh. SSE-MLS-2; exh. SSE-TH-2.

Shorelines – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(F)

74. The site of the proposed Project is not located on a shoreline. The closest shoreline to the Project is that of the Williams River, located approximately 125 feet to the east of the Project area. Lew-Smith pf. at 4, exh. SSE-MLS-2.

75. The Project will not result in any vegetative clearing along the shoreline of the Williams River and will retain the shoreline in its existing condition. Thus, the Project will not result in undue adverse impacts to shorelines. Lew-Smith pf. at 4, exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Wetlands – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(G)

76. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on wetlands. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

77. There is a Class II wetland located west of the Project site. The Project has been sited to avoid direct impacts to the Class II wetland. However, the new Project's gravel access road will result in approximately 1,224 square feet of impacts to the Class II wetland buffer at its northern extent. Lew-Smith pf. at 5-6; exh. SSE-MLS-2; exh. SSE-TH-2.

78. Petitioner will obtain a Vermont Wetland Permit application for the Project and expects a permit to be issued in support of Criterion (G). Lew-Smith pf. at 5-6; exh. SSE-ANR-1.

79. Petitioner has agreed to conduct a comprehensive wetland and riparian buffer restoration within approximately 26,296 square feet of wetland and riparian buffer areas along the southwestern edge of the parcel that were previously impacted, unrelated to the Project. Lew-Smith pf. at 5-6; exh. SSE-ANR-1.

80. Before beginning site preparation or construction, Petitioner will obtain approval for the Wetland and Riparian Buffer Restoration Plan from ANR's Wetlands Program, which will be incorporated into the Vermont Wetland Permit application and subsequent permit. All restoration activities will be in accordance with the approved restoration plan and all other associated ANR permits, approvals, or directives. Lew-Smith pf. at 5-6; exh. SSE-ANR-1.

81. With these measures, the Project will result in no undue adverse impacts to wetland resources, and due to the planned restoration along the tributary, the amount of naturally vegetated wetland buffer will increase, thereby increasing wetland functioning in this area. Lew-Smith pf. at 5-6; exh. SSE-MLS-2; exh. SSE-TH-2.

Soil Erosion – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(4)

82. The Project will not cause unreasonable soil erosion or reduction in the capacity of the land to hold water such that a dangerous or unhealthy condition may result. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

83. The Project will be constructed in accordance with the Vermont Standards & Specifications for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control (“EPSC”), February 2020. Goddard pf. at 9.

84. The Project will be subject to an ANR Moderate Risk Construction Stormwater General Permit or Individual Construction Stormwater Permit (“INDC”). The Project will be constructed in accordance with the Vermont Standards & Specifications for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control, June 19, 2025. No work shall commence until the Project receives its Moderate Risk or INDC permit. Goddard pf. at 7-9.

85. The earth disturbances that will occur during construction include installation of the access road, site grading associated with the access road and elevated transformer pad, installation of electrical equipment, and associated secondary oil containment, electrical switchgear, underground trenching of the electrical conduit, construction staging areas, prime ag stockpile areas, concentrated work areas, vegetative clearing and grubbing, fencing, and miscellaneous other disturbances for construction vehicle travel and post installation. This construction work will disturb ±15.08 acres. The majority of this disturbance is for construction. Goddard pf. at 7-8; exh. SSE-TH-2.

86. Stormwater runoff and erosion control methods that will be used during construction include: temporary soil stabilization with mulch within 14 days of initial site disturbance, a

temporary stabilized construction entrance, silt fence downslope of all proposed disturbances and when work is proposed within 100' of a downslope wetland, stormwater disconnection areas and a gravel wetland to collect stormwater runoff from the access road. Goddard pf. at 8; exh. SSE-TH-2.

87. The implementation of erosion prevention and sediment control measures during construction, and accordance with the EPSC Plan, will ensure that all sediment is contained on the site during construction. Thus, the Project will not cause unreasonable soil erosion or reduction in the capacity of the land to hold water so that a dangerous or unhealthy condition could result. Goddard pf. at 9; exh. SSE-TH-2.

88. The Project does not require an operational stormwater permit. The Project will create ±.10 acres of impervious surfaces due to the proposed gravel access drive and concrete equipment pads for the transformer and miscellaneous equipment. There are no existing impervious surfaces on the Project parcel. As there is less than half an acre of new impervious surface added to the parcel as a result of the Project, no operational stormwater permit will be required. Goddard pf. at 8; exh. SSE-TH-2.

89. In the SSE-ANR MOU, the Parties proposed the following CPG conditions regarding stormwater permitting:

Before beginning site preparation or construction of the Project, the CPG Holder shall obtain from the Agency authorization for the Project under an Individual Construction Stormwater Permit (INDC), if concurrent earth disturbance will exceed 5 acres, or a Moderate Risk Construction Stormwater General Permit (Moderate Risk), if concurrent earth disturbance will not exceed 5 acres. If the Project proceeds under an INDC permit, concurrent earth disturbance shall not exceed 10 acres. All Project work shall be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permit and any subsequent amendments. No site preparation or construction work shall commence until the applicable permit has been issued.

Exhibit SSE-ANR-1.

Transportation Systems – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(5)

90. The Project will not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe conditions with respect to transportation systems. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

91. Access to the Project site will be off Route 103 using a new driveway into the Project Site. Exh. SSE-TH-2; Hand pf. at 19.

92. The solar panels and racking components will be shipped on pallets, typically delivered by standard tractor-trailer trucks. Hand pf. at 7.

93. The transformer will be delivered assembled on a standard-width flatbed tractor trailer. Other Project equipment (e.g., inverters, solar panels, racking, wire, cable, conduit, and construction materials) will also be transported on standard-width trucks. Hand pf. at 6-7.

94. During construction, approximately 30 ($\pm$) tractor trailers will deliver modules, racking, and inverters to the site, over the entire multi-week construction period. Following initial delivery, construction-related traffic will be limited to more infrequent deliveries for smaller, necessary electrical supplies and workers entering and exiting the site. No oversize or overweight loads requiring special permits are expected. Hand pf. at 19.

95. During operation of the Project, entry to the Project will be limited to maintenance and repairs, and therefore there will be only occasional Project-related traffic that will not cause unreasonable traffic or unsafe conditions. Hand pf. at 20.

Educational Services – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(6)

96. The Project will not create any full-time, permanent jobs, and thus no new school-aged children would enter the system in the town. Therefore, the Project will not cause an unreasonable burden on educational services. Hand pf. at 20.

Municipal Services – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(7)

97. The Project will not cause an unreasonable burden on the town to provide municipal services. It will not require any municipal water or sewer, nor any unique fire, police, or rescue services. Hand pf. at 20.

Aesthetics, Historic Sites, and Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)

Aesthetics

98. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on the scenic or natural beauty of the area or on aesthetics. Owens pf. at 3-4; exh. SSE-JO-2. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

99. The Project site is in a relatively low-lying location where visibility is generally limited by existing mixed evergreen and deciduous vegetation and intervening landform. Visibility is typically limited to areas immediately around the Project site. Owens pf. at 3-4; exh. SSE-JO-2.

100. The Project will be visible from portions of Vermont Route 103 as travelers pass the Project entrance, as well as from short segments of Route 103 and Legion Drive to the northwest. There will also be potential visibility of the Project from several nearby commercial properties, the closest nearby residential properties, and potential limited visibility of the Project from the Green Mountain Railroad and the Williams River. Owens pf. at 3-4; exh. SSE-JO-2.

101. Where visible, the Project will be a noticeable change to existing views, and as such will have an adverse effect on the aesthetics and scenic and natural beauty of the area. However, the Project will not result in an undue adverse impact. Owens pf. at 3-5; exh. SSE-JO-2.

102. The Project would not violate any clearly written community standard in the Town or Regional plan intended to preserve the aesthetics or scenic beauty of the area. Owens pf. at 5; exh. SSE-JO-2.

103. The Project incorporates reasonable siting and significant landscape mitigation efforts to reduce potential visibility and harmonize the Project with its surroundings. The Project will be set low in the landscape and largely screened by existing vegetation and landform, and landscape mitigation consisting of a mix of evergreen and deciduous plantings is proposed to augment existing vegetative screening along the northern Project extent and near the proposed access drive. Owens pf. at 5; exh. SSE-JO-2.

104. Finally, the Project would not offend the sensibilities of the average person, in that it would not be offensive or shocking because it does not have extensive visibility from public locations and would not appear significantly out of character with its surroundings or significantly diminish the scenic qualities of the area in which it is proposed. Owens pf. at 5; exh. SSE-JO-2.

105. Based on these findings, the Project satisfies the second prong of the Quechee test and will not result in an undue adverse aesthetic impact. Owens pf. at 5; Exh. SSE-JO-2.

Historic Sites

106. The Project will not have any adverse effect with regard to historic sites. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

107. There are no above-ground historic resources on the Project Parcel. Hand pf. at 23.

108. VDHP has reviewed the Project location and has no concerns with the indirect effects on historic standing structures around the Project area. VDHP concludes that the Project will have no adverse impacts to above ground historic resources. Hand pf. at 23; exh. SSE-VDHP-1.

109. VDHP concludes that the Project site is potentially archaeologically sensitive, and Petitioner has agreed to conduct additional archaeological investigations in coordination with VDHP. Hand pf. at 21-22.

110. Under the VDHP MOU, SSE has agreed to proposed CPG conditions ensuring that all necessary studies will be conducted prior to site preparation and construction of the Project so that any necessary mitigation can be planned and accomplished before commencing construction and in coordination with VDHP. SSE-VDHP-1.

111. SSE has included all of the proposed CPG conditions set forth in the VDHP MOU in its proposed CPG. Thus, the Project will not have an undue adverse impact with regard to historic sites.

Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas

112. There are no significant natural communities that would be considered Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas within the Project Area and thus, there will be no adverse impacts on Rare and Irreplaceable Natural Areas. Lew-Smith pf. at 6; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Necessary Wildlife Habitat and Endangered Species – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)(A)

113. The Project will not destroy or significantly imperil necessary wildlife habitat or any endangered species. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

114. There is no necessary wildlife habitat (“NWH”) present within the Project area or the distribution line corridor. Thus, the Project will not result in any undue adverse impacts to NWH. Lew-Smith pf. at 6-7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

115. A rare plant inventory was conducted for the Project area on October 5, 2023. No rare, threatened, endangered or uncommon plants were documented during this inventory. The Project will therefore have no adverse impact on RTE plant species. Lew-Smith pf. at 7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

116. The Project and the distribution corridor are located in the town of Chester, within the predicted summer ranges for both Northern Long-Eared Bat and Tricolored Bat, which are federally listed endangered species. The Project does not propose to clear more than 1% of the surrounding 1-mile radius of forested area and therefore does not trigger conservation measures under the Vermont Fish and Wildlife guidance regarding NLEB. Lew-Smith pf. at 7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

117. No other RTE animal species are a concern on this Project site. Lew-Smith pf. at 7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

118. Based on the above, the Project will not have an undue adverse impact on RTE animal species. Lew-Smith pf. at 7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Primary Agricultural Soils – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)

119. The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on Primary Agricultural Soils (“PAS”). This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

120. There is a total of 25.49(±) acres of mapped PAS located on the Project parcel. Of these mapped soils, 15.08 (±) acres are located within the Project's limits of disturbance ("LOD"). Goddard pf. at 10; exh. SSE-TH-2.

121. Approximately 0.31 acres of PAS will be disturbed to create the access road, install the equipment pads, install stormwater best management practices, the minor associated grading, and conduit trenching. Soils disturbed for trenching will be separated by their horizons and re-laid in the same order following installation of the buried lines/conduit. If sand bedding is used, then the PAS shall be removed by horizon and stored in a PAS stockpile area as shown on the site plan. Goddard pf. at 9; exh. SSE-TH-2.

122. All other PAS removed during construction will be stockpiled within the Project fence line and preserved on site in accordance with the AAFM guidelines for the life of the Project. At Project decommissioning, these soils will be restored to the site in accordance with the AAFM guidelines. Goddard pf. at 10; exh. SSE-TH-2.

123. Petitioner and AAFM have entered into an MOU that includes other proposed conditions regarding the treatment of PAS during construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Project. SSE-AAFM-1.

124. Subject to compliance with the proposed conditions in the MOU, AAFM concurs that the Project will not have an undue adverse impact on PAS. Exh. SSE-AAFM-1.

125. All proposed CPG conditions set forth in the AAFM MOU are incorporated into the Petitioner's proposed CPG.

Development Affecting Public Investments – 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(9)(K)

126. The Project will not endanger the public or quasi-public investment in adjacent lands, services, or facilities, or materially jeopardize or interfere with the public's use and enjoyment of those lands, services, or facilities. Hand pf. at 23.

127. The closest public investment to the Project site is Route 103, located approximately 162' west of the Project. The Project will not impact or create any adverse burdens on this public investment given the limited and temporary use of the road during construction and operation. Therefore, the Project will not endanger or interfere with the public's use or enjoyment of this public investment. Hand pf. at 23; exh. SSE-TH-2.

Use of Natural Resources – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)

128. The Project will not have an undue adverse effect with regard to the use of natural resources. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

129. A small amount of necessary vegetative clearing (0.06 acres) is proposed for the Project, which will not have any undue adverse impact on streams, shorelines, or necessary wildlife habitat. Exh. SSE-TH-2; Lew-Smith pf. at 3 and 7; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

130. Neither the Project nor the distribution line upgrades will have an undue adverse impact on headwaters, floodways, streams, shorelines, wetlands, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, rare threatened and endangered species and necessary wildlife habitat, or outstanding resource waters, as set forth in findings 47 - 89 and 98 - 125 above. See also Lew-Smith pf. at 3-8; exh. SSE-MLS-2.

Greenhouse Gas Impacts – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)

131. The Project will not have an undue adverse effect with regard to greenhouse gases (“GHG”). This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

132. The Project’s solar panels will annually produce an estimated 5,000 (±) megawatt hours of electricity without creating any greenhouse gas emissions (“GHG”) during its operation. Hand pf. at 25.

133. The Project will have the effect of reducing GHG emissions within the ISO-New England regional grid, by replacing power that would otherwise be produced by fossil fuels. Hand pf. at 25.

Public Health and Safety – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)

134. The Project will not have an undue adverse effect on public health and safety. This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

135. The Project does not present any unique risks to the public. The Project will be installed to meet the applicable safety standards of the National Electrical Code and National Electrical Safety Code, and utility interconnection standards for safe and reliable operation of solar electric plants. Hand pf. at 24.

136. All switchgear equipment will be inside a locked, UL-listed, code-approved electrical enclosure. Hand pf. at 24.

137. The electrical lines that connect the inverters and transformer to the GMP electrical system will be located at an adequate height above ground. Hand pf. at 24-25.

138. A perimeter fence with a minimum height of 7’ will enclose the array and will be posted with appropriate electrical warning signs. Hand pf. at 25.

139. The CPG includes a condition that requires SSE and its successors or assigns to register with Dig Safe and comply with 30 V.S.A. Chapter 86 and Rule 3.800 for the life of the Project.

Least-Cost Integrated Resource Planning – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(6)

140. Petitioner is not a regulated distribution utility, and therefore this criteria does not apply to the Project. Hand pf. at 26.

Comprehensive Energy Plan – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(7)

141. The Project will be compliant with the Comprehensive Energy Plan (“CEP”). This finding is supported by the additional findings below.

142. The CEP covers electricity, heating and process fuels, and energy in transportation and land use decisions. It sets an ambitious long-term goal of obtaining 75 percent of the state’s total energy needs from renewable sources by 2032, and 90 percent of the state’s total energy needs from renewable sources by mid-century. The Project will contribute to achieving these goals by delivering 5,000 MWh of renewable energy each year. Hand pf. at 5 and 26-27.

143. The Project’s siting also furthers the CEP’s siting goals of minimizing conversion of natural lands while seeking to maintain the lands’ ecological functions. Hand pf. at 27.

144. On July 28, 2026, DPS filed a Section 202 (f) determination letter confirming that the Project is consistent with the 2022 Vermont Electric Plan.

Transmission Facilities – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(10)

145. The Project can be served economically by existing or planned transmission facilities without undue adverse effect on Vermont utilities or customers. Hand pf. at 28. This finding is supported by the additional findings below, and the findings above regarding Section 248(b)(3).

146. The Project will interconnect with GMP's existing distribution line located along Route 103. Hand pf. at 28; exh. SSE-TH-2.

147. The costs of any electrical system modifications required to interconnect the Project to the GMP distribution system will be borne by SSE. Hand pf. at 15, 28.

Setbacks – 30 V.S.A. § 248(s)

148. The Project will comply with the statewide minimum setback requirements of 30 V.S.A. § 248(s). Hand pf. at 28.

149. The Project's setbacks are 50' from all property lines. Hand pf. at 28; exh. SSE-TH-2.

150. Additionally, the Project is set back approximately 162' from the edge of the closest traveled way, Route 103. Hand pf. at 28; exh. SSE-TH-2.

VI. Conclusions

Based upon all of the above evidence, and with the conditions I recommend that the Commission include as part of its approval of the Project, I conclude that the Project meets the following section 248(b) criteria, to the extent they apply:

- (a) will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region with due consideration having been given to the recommendations of the municipal and regional planning commissions, and the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies;
- (b) is required to meet the need for present and future demand for service which could not otherwise be provided in a more cost-effective manner through energy conservation programs and measures and energy efficiency and land management measures;
- (c) will not adversely affect system stability and reliability;

- (d) will result in an economic benefit to the state and its residents;
- (e) will not have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, the natural environment, and the public health and safety, with due consideration having been given to the criteria specified in 10 V.S.A. § 1424a(d) and §§ 6086(a)(1) through (8) and (9)(K);
- (f) is consistent with the principles of least-cost integrated resource planning;
- (g) is in compliance with the electric energy plan approved by the DPS under § 202 of Title 30 V.S.A.;
- (h) does not involve a facility affecting or located on any segment of the waters of the State that has been designated as outstanding resource waters by the Secretary of Natural Resources;
- (i) does not involve a waste-to-energy facility; and
- (j) can be served economically by existing or planned transmission facilities without undue adverse effect on Vermont utilities or customers.

VII. Order

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED by the Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) of the State of Vermont that:

1. The findings and recommendations of the Hearing Officer are adopted. All other findings proposed by parties, to the extent that they are inconsistent with this Order, were considered and are not adopted.

2. In accordance with the evidence and plans submitted in this proceeding, the 2.75 MW solar electric generation facility (the "Project") proposed for construction and operation by Savage Solar Energy LLC (the "CPG Holder") off Route 103 in Chester, Vermont, will promote the general good of the State of Vermont pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248, and a certificate of public good ("CPG") to that effect shall be issued in this matter.

3. As a condition of this Order, the CPG Holder shall comply with all terms and conditions set out in the CPG issued in conjunction with this Order.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this _____ day of _____, 2026.

_____]

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF VERMONT

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

FILED:

ATTEST: _____
Clerk of the Commission