

March 18, 2024

Electronic Delivery

Franklin Conservation Commission
Municipal Building
355 East Central Street
Franklin, MA 02038

**Re: Response to MassDEP Comments
Notice of Intent Application
DEP File #: 159-1287
160 Maple Street (Assessor’s Parcels 239-010, 254-9, and 255-1)
Franklin, Massachusetts**

[LEC File #: BoE\22-015.04]

Dear Members of the Conservation Commission:

On behalf of the Applicant, Maple Street Solar, LLC, LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc., (LEC) is submitting this response to comments provided by MassDEP, dated March 6, 2024. The following are MassDEP’s comments in **bold**, followed by a response from LEC in [blue font](#).

- 1. The applicant should provide a wetland replication plan that meets the Massachusetts Inland Wetland Replication Guidelines (2022), which includes but is not limited to proposed grading; area cross-section; plant quantities species, & sizes; monitoring & inspection requirements; and soil specifications.**

The most recent plans titled *Proposed Site Plan Documents for Maple Street Solar LLC* prepared by Bohler, dated 7/20/2023, last revised February 21, 2024 were submitted to the Commission by Bohler on February 22, 2024. As part of the revised plan set, Bohler added Landscaping Plans (Sheets C-701 through C-708). The Landscaping Plans, specifically Landscaping Plan E (Sheet C-706), contains details regarding species to be planted, quantity, and approximate locations. A note on the lower left of the sheet specifies details of the soil to be added. A Plant Schedule is located on the top right of the Overall Landscaping Plan (Sheet C-701).

The Wetland Replication Area will be created in an existing disturbed area (golf course fairway) by excavating to appropriate sub-grade, backfilling with organic-rich topsoil, and planting the area with native wetland indicator species and a wetland seed mix as detailed on the Landscaping Plans. The replication is 1,833 s.f. in extent, and is long and narrow in shape, extending approximately 115 feet long by 15 feet wide. Due to it extending only 15 feet from the existing wetland, a cross section detail and proposed grading would be difficult to represent at a suitable scale. It is anticipated that the final grade throughout the replication area and at its outer edges 15 feet upgradient of the existing wetland would be equal to, or only slightly above the existing

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grade of the BVW. Since the activity will be supervised by a wetland scientist, the final grading is likely to be determined during construction, rather than relying on a proposed contour on the plans.

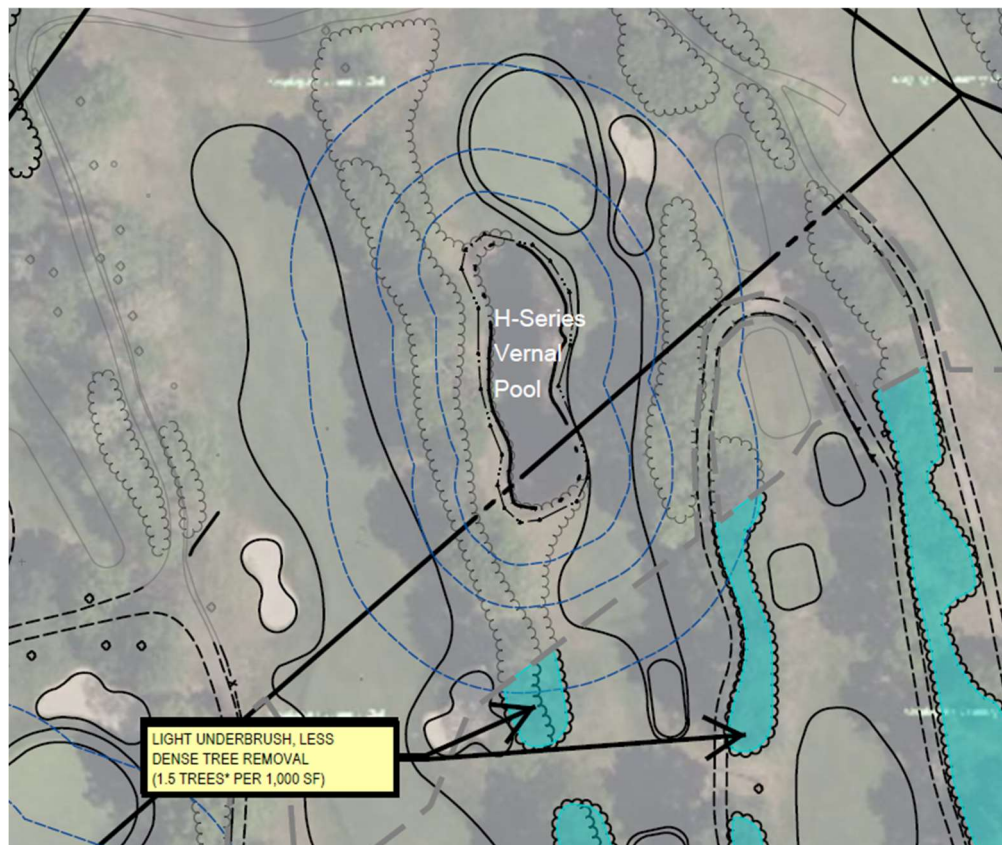
The Project Team anticipates a Special Condition in the Order of Conditions requiring that the construction of the replication area be supervised by a Wetland Scientist experienced in Wetland Replication in addition to monitoring for two growing seasons.

- 2. Proposed plant species and quantities should also be provided for the Buffer Zone restoration areas. Species chosen for these areas should be comprised of upland species native to Massachusetts.**

See Sheets C-703, C-705, and C-706 for specific Buffer Zone restoration planting details.

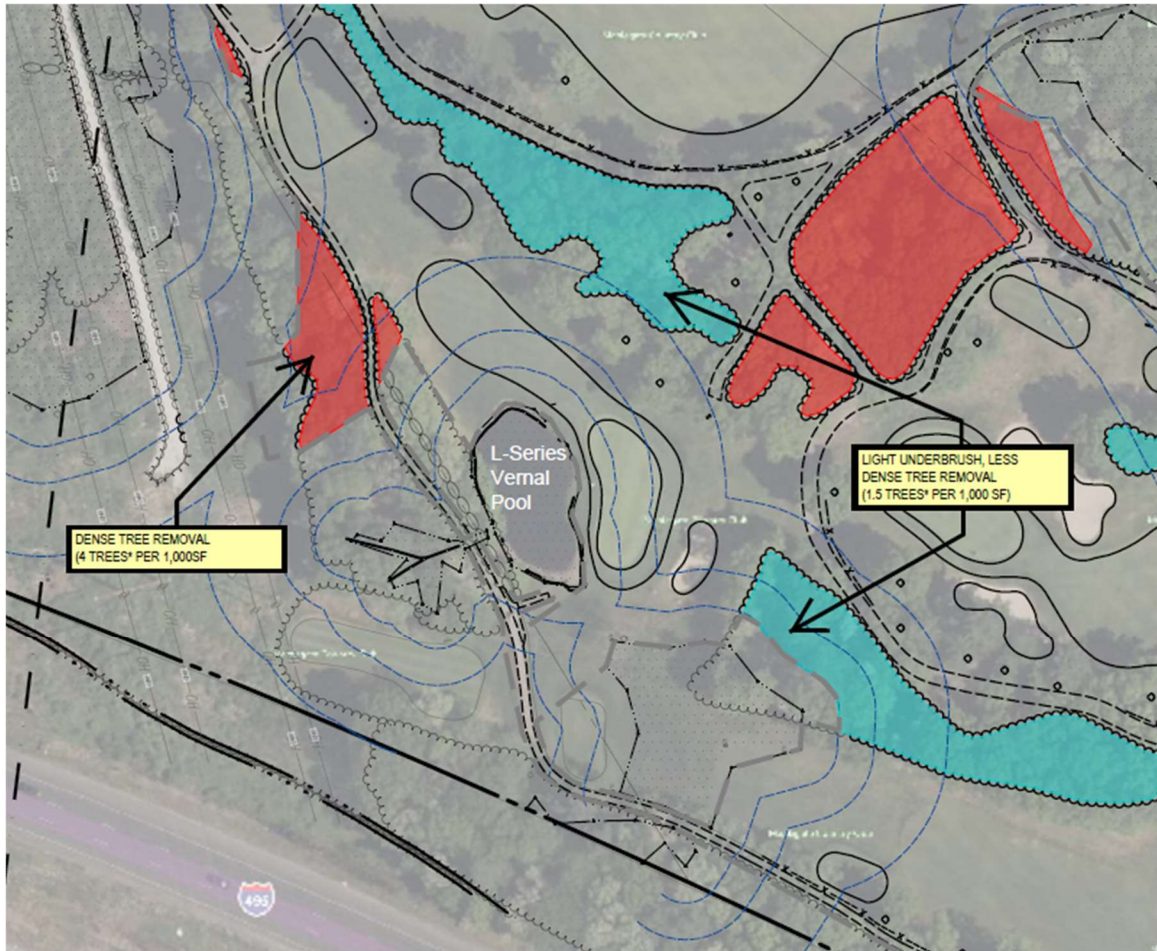
- 3. The loss of forested areas that surround vernal pools and connect the vernal pools to other wooded areas may adversely impact the future migration of amphibians to these pools.**

LEC confirmed that two wetland areas within the Project meet the criteria for certification as Vernal Pools under the NHESP Certification Guidelines, and also meet the Bylaw definition of Vernal Pool: the H-series and L-series. The H-series is located mostly north of the project boundary, within a parcel to be designated as Open Space. Limited tree clearing is proposed within 100 feet of this vernal pool, and the clearing is limited to the “light underbrush, less dense” existing forest category, as detailed on the plan titled *Tree Removal Exhibit for Maple Street Solar LLC* prepared by Bohler dated 2/21/2024, excerpted below.

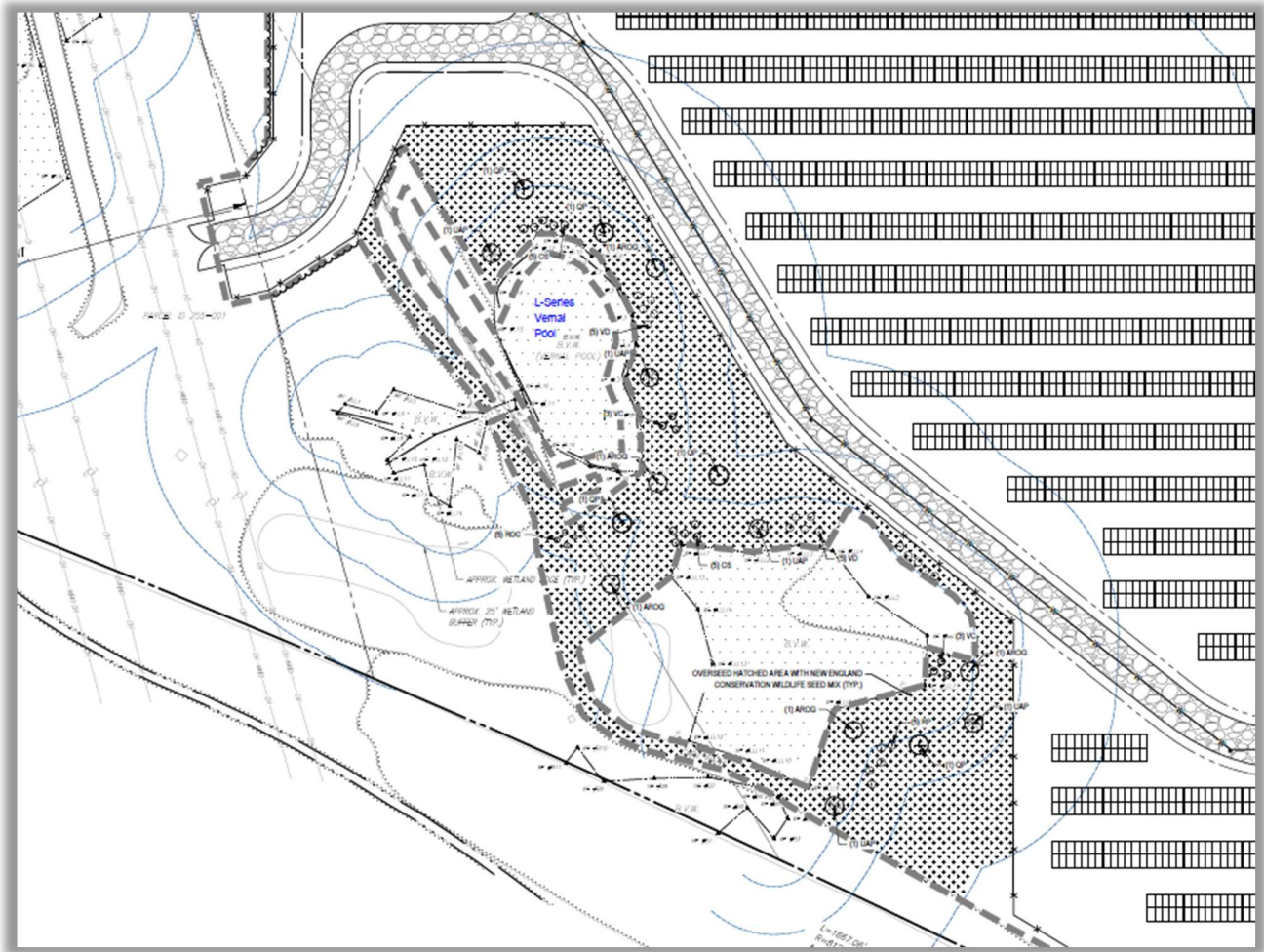


This Vernal Pool will be readily accessible to migrating amphibians north of the project, via the Open Space parcel. The majority of existing forest canopy near the Vernal Pool will remain, as part of the Open Space.

The L-series Vernal Pool is presently bordered by maintained golf course features, and limited forested habitat as shown below in the excerpt from the Tree Removal Exhibit:



Although some “dense tree removal” category (red shading) will take place to the northwest of the pool, that removal is in the outer portions of the Buffer Zone, and the removal will be mitigated by a significant restoration effort. This restoration includes not just the area immediately surrounding the Vernal Pool, but also a significant portion of the area adjacent to a BVW to the southeast (see graphic below, taken from Sheet C-705).



Amphibian migration to and from this Vernal Pool will not be inhibited due to the project, and the overall habitat quality adjacent to the Vernal Pool will be greatly improved by the restoration plantings.

Thank you for your consideration of this additional information. We look forward to meeting with you at the March 21, 2024 Public Hearing. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at our Wakefield office at 781-245-2500 or by email at dwells@lecenvironmental.com.

Sincerely,

LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Senior Wildlife/Wetland Scientist

cc: MassDEP, Central Region
Maple Street Solar, LLC
Bohler