

State Environmental Quality Review  
**NEGATIVE DECLARATION**  
Notice of Determination of Non-Significance

**Project:** Fire Island Pines to Watch Hill 13 kV Underground Cable

**Date:** August 30, 2019

This notice is issued in accordance with Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations at 6 NYCRR Part 617 and 21 NYCRR LXXXI 10052.

The Long Island Power Authority (“Authority”) has determined, based on information provided by PSEG Long Island and the Environmental Assessment Form Parts 1, 2 & 3 prepared by GEI, that the Proposed Action described below will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

**Name of Action:** Fire Island Pines to Watch Hill 13 kV Underground Cable (“Proposed Action”)

**Location:** From Barrett Beach to Watch Hill, Fire Island, Town of Brookhaven, New York

**SEQR Status:** Type I

**Conditioned Negative Declaration:** No

**Proposed Action Description:**

The Proposed Action includes the installation of a new 13kV underground distribution cable on Fire Island from the Fire Island Pines Substation east to Watch Hill in the Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York (Figure 1). The Proposed Action follows the path of the existing underground 13 kV cable. The cable section from Fire Island Pines to Barrett Beach (a/k/a Talisman) was completed in May 2017 as there was exposed live cable in publicly accessible areas, which at that time, required immediate remediation. LIPA issued a Negative Declaration for that portion of the work on May 9, 2017. The proposed cable installation will continue from the portion previously completed at Barrett Beach and reach Watch Hill.

The Proposed Action will be completed in four cable route sections:

- Section 1: From Talisman/Barrett Beach to Water Island to an Existing PMH gear on West Walk for a distance of approximately 3,740 feet. This section includes replacement of two PMH switchgears and installation of two new PMH switchgears on 5-foot by 5-foot fiberglass pads.
- Section 2: From Water Island at East Walk to Davis Park just west of Fifth Walk for a distance of approximately 5,850 feet. This section includes replacement of one PMH switchgear and installation of two new PMH switchgears on 5-foot by 5-foot fiberglass pads.
- Section 3: From Davis Park near Fifth Walk to Davis Park just east of Whalebone Walk for a distance of approximately 4,040 feet.
- Section 4: From Davis Park just east of Whalebone Walk to Watch Hill just east of Ocean Walk (PMH switchgear #62503) for a distance of approximately 2,750 feet. This section includes installation of one new PMH switchgear on a 5-foot by 5-foot fiberglass pad.

Figures 2A – 2C depict the project route. The majority of the proposed cable route from Barrett Beach east to Davis Park will follow a newly created Suffolk County Water Authority (SCWA) water main Right of Way (ROW) (Figures 2A & 2B). Two sections of the route follow the existing 13 kV cable route in

Water Island and to the east of Davis Park (see Figures 2B and 2C) where SCWA did not install a water main. The cable will be installed via a 1.5-foot-wide and 3-foot-deep open trench.

The total length of the proposed cable route will be approximately 16,380 linear feet, and the total disturbance area is approximately 3.83 acres. All disturbed areas within existing unvegetated pathways will be restored to pre-construction conditions. The Proposed Action is anticipated to commence in November 2019 and be completed in March 2020.

The new cable is required to ensure reliability on this portion of Fire Island. The existing underground 13kV feeder is estimated to be 30 to 40 years old and long stretches are inaccessible. As such, repairing an existing outage would first require locating the failure, then obtaining permits from the National Park Service (NPS) before construction can commence.

### **Reasons Supporting This Determination:**

The Proposed Action is a "Type I" Action as that term is defined in SEQRA. Based on a review of the project's scope of work in accordance with the requirements of SEQRA, the Full Environmental Assessment Form Parts 1, 2 & 3 ("FEAF") was prepared to evaluate potential impacts of the Proposed Action. The work will be completed within previously disturbed areas and no environmentally sensitive areas will be disturbed as a result of the proposed construction. The Proposed Action will mainly involve underground improvements, with the exception of three switchgears to be replaced, and the installation of five new switchgears along the route.

The SEAF evaluated the effect of the Proposed Action upon land use, natural resources, visual resources and character of the area, energy use, environmental hazards and human health resources. Shallow groundwater areas, floodplains, wetlands, cultural resources, rare, threatened, and endangered species, and significant natural communities were identified within or in proximity to the project area. The majority of the proposed construction will take place within existing unvegetated pathways, walkways or will follow a newly created SCWA ROW. The level of disturbance from installation of the cable and PMH gear will total approximately 3.83 acres. All areas will be restored to pre-construction conditions following construction. A summary of the assessment conducted for each category is provided below.

#### Groundwater

Installation of the new cable via open trench will occur at shallow depths (approximately 3 feet). Although cable installation activities may directly encounter the water table, it will not have adverse impacts on groundwater quality. The installation operation will be a short-term disturbance confined to the shallow aquifer, and not at depths affecting the intake elevations of local water supply wells.

#### Floodplains

The proposed cable will be located entirely underground. All construction will take place within existing unvegetated pathways, walkways and ROWs and have no impact on flooding or floodplains within the Study Area (i.e., 300 foot adjacent area on either side of the cable route). This configuration will not increase the potential for property damage caused by flooding. The Proposed Action does not entail any permanent changes in topography within the designated floodplains.

#### Wetlands

Sections of the Proposed Action are located within NYSDEC mapped tidal wetland adjacent areas (300-foot adjacent area). The Proposed Action will follow existing unvegetated pathways and walkways for the majority of the proposed route. There are no adverse impacts to wetlands or wetland adjacent areas as a result of the Proposed Action.

### Ecological Communities

The proposed construction will take place in existing unvegetated pathways, walkways, and ROWs and is not expected to have any adverse impacts on terrestrial ecological communities and vegetation. Sections of the ROW that have revegetated since the water main installation will require disturbance for the cable installation. It is anticipated that the ROW will re-vegetate naturally. If any vegetation adjacent to the route is impacted by project construction, disturbed areas will be restored with appropriate native species. All disturbed areas within the Proposed Action will be restored to pre-construction conditions following construction. The new switchgears will be incorporated into the existing vegetation management program to maintain required safety and operational clearances around utility structures, which includes weeding and/or mowing.

### Cultural Resources

Based on results from a search of the SHPO CRIS database, there are no properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the vicinity of the Proposed Action. Based on communication with NPS, the proposed cable route east of Davis Park required a Phase 1A and 1B archaeological investigation. A NPS ARPA Permit was issued February 22, 2018. The field component of archaeological survey in the Watch Hill area of the cable route was completed by Paleowest Archaeology from July 11-13, 2018. The pedestrian survey and subsurface investigation did not identify any archaeological materials or features within the proposed underground cable route. Based upon the lack of prehistoric or historic cultural material, Paleowest recommended a "no historic properties affected" determination.

### Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

Listed plants identified as occurring on or near the Proposed Action include seabeach amaranth, sandplain gerardia and rambur's forktail. As identified in Attachment C, no impacts to these species will occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

Birds and mammals listed as potentially occurring on or near the Proposed Action include piping plover, least tern, common tern, roseate tern, red knot, snowy egret and northern long eared bat.

The Proposed Action route is near ocean beach habitat in some areas. USFWS, NPS, and NYSDEC may require mitigation measures to ensure that construction activities (e.g. visual and aural disturbances) do not disrupt piping plover breeding behavior. These measures include restricting construction activities between April 1 and August 31. Applications to the agencies have been submitted to each agency to coordinate regarding any construction restrictions for these species. Regulatory agencies may require work window restrictions or other mitigation, if it is determined that protected species may be impacted by the Proposed Action. Typically, construction work is prohibited between April 1 and August 31 in areas that contain or are adjacent to piping plover, least tern and common tern habitat. As such, construction activities will not continue after March 31. .

Due to lack of suitable habitat for roseate tern, red knots and northern long eared bats in the Proposed Action construction area, these species will not be impacted by the Proposed Action.

No Significant Natural Communities are located along the cable route.

No potential for a significant adverse impact on the environment, flora, fauna, community character or historic resources has been identified as a result of the construction or operation of the Proposed Action.

Based on the FEAF and PSEGLI's recommendation according to the standards as set forth in SEQRA, the Proposed Action will not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

**For Further Information:**

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Dated: August 30, 2019