

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

Project: Bridgehampton Substation New Bank and Half Line Up Switchgear (the “Proposed Action”) Approval Request Memo

Date: June 23, 2022

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 PSEG Long Island 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: Bridgehampton Substation New Bank and Half Line Up Switchgear (the “Proposed Action”)

Location: Within and immediately north of the existing Bridgehampton Substation located within the hamlet of Bridgehampton, Town of Southampton, Suffolk County, New York

SEQR Status: Unlisted

Conditioned Negative Declaration: No

Proposed Action Description

The Proposed Action includes the installation of new substation equipment within the existing Bridgehampton Substation (the “Substation”), as well as the partial reconfiguration of existing transmission circuit #s 69-965, 69-975, 69-968 and 69-969. The Substation is located on the western side of Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike approximately 2,500 feet north of Scuttle Hole Road. The approximate location of the Proposed Action is depicted on Figure 1.

Recent engineering studies and analysis by PSEG Long Island have concluded that the Proposed Action is needed to support increased load growth that is forecasted to exceed the capacity of the Substation. The proposed Substation upgrades are necessary in order to provide an adequate and reliable power supply to the surrounding area. The addition of new substation equipment and the reconfiguration of transmission circuits feeding the Substation will allow any transformer bank at the Substation to be fed through any of the connecting circuits. This will consequently provide greater switching and load distribution/balancing capabilities at the Substation.

New equipment to be installed at the Substation will include one new 69/13 kilovolt (kV) 33MVA transformer bank, one new half line up switchgear, two double circuit breakers, several switching assemblies, and associated bus work modifications.

The proposed reconfigurations of transmission circuit #s 69-965, 69-975, 69-968 and 69-969 are depicted on Figures 2 and 3. Following the reconfiguration of these circuits, and the installation of the new substation equipment, the incoming transmission circuits will be able to supply any of the now three transformer banks at the Substation.

To accommodate the transmission circuit reconfigurations, approximately 10 existing wood transmission poles (ranging from approximately 25 feet to 66 feet in height above grade) will be removed and two existing wood transmission poles (that currently extend to approximate heights of 52 and 75 feet above grade) will be replaced with new wood transmission poles that will extend to approximate heights of 58 feet to 74 feet above grade. In addition, two new riser poles will be installed that will extend to approximate heights of 60 feet above grade. The replacement and new poles will stand no more than 10 feet taller than existing poles and infrastructure in the immediate vicinity. Guy wire, anchor, and pole-top modifications will occur as needed. The Proposed Action will result in approximately 0.15 acres of disturbance.

The Proposed Action is located in a forested area; the closest residential or commercial properties are located more than 300 feet from the site. Existing overhead transmission circuits currently run east-west immediately north of the Substation. Pole work activities will be occurring within this immediate area.

Reasons Supporting This Determination:

The Proposed Action is an “Unlisted” Action as defined in SEQRA. An Environmental Assessment (“EA”) was completed by PSEG Long Island. The EA analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. Based on a review of the Proposed Action’s scope of work in accordance with the requirements of SEQRA, the Short Environmental Assessment Form Parts 1, 2 & 3 (“SEAF”) were prepared. Key findings are outlined below.

- Installation of new Substation equipment and utility poles will occur within, and in the immediate vicinity of, the existing Substation where existing electrical infrastructure that is comparable in both height and appearance currently exists. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in any significant adverse visual or land use impacts.
- The Proposed Action is located within the South Fork Special Groundwater Protection Area (SGPA) and the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, which are designated as Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs) to protect groundwater, water quality, and drinking water (see Figure 4). The Proposed Action will involve ground disturbance at relatively shallow depths (less than 25 feet below grade). Based on the United States Geological Survey Long Island Depth to Water Viewer, groundwater at the Proposed Action site is located at depths greater than 70 feet below grade; therefore, excavation activities will not encounter groundwater. Further, the Proposed Action will involve minimal removal of low-lying vegetation, will not involve any waste discharges to ground surface, and will not involve the installation of any sanitary facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not result in significant adverse impacts to these CEAs.

- The Proposed Action is located within an area that is designated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) as archaeologically sensitive. The Proposed Action will be completed within, and in the immediate vicinity of the existing Substation, which is currently developed with connecting aboveground infrastructure. A Phase I archaeological survey was conducted in support of a future PSEG Long Island project (Bridgehampton to Buell New 69kV Underground Cable or “B2B Project”). This survey was completed along the length of the entire proposed B2B circuit, and included subsurface test pitting within the northern portion of the Proposed Action site (in the transmission pole work areas) in order to evaluate the absence of presence of cultural materials. Cultural materials were not identified in these test pits. Investigation activities were not completed within the developed substation. Based on the results of the investigation and subsequent consultation with OPRHP, OPRHP responded in an October 25, 2021 letter indicating that no archeological and/or historic resources would be impacted by that future project (see Attachment A). Given the location of the Proposed Action within a previously disturbed area, as well as the findings of the archeological investigation conducted for the future B2B project, the Proposed Action will not result in significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources.
- No portions of the Proposed Action are located within or immediately adjacent to any National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)-mapped wetlands, or any New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regulated wetlands or wetland adjacent areas. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not impact wetlands.
- The following threatened or endangered species were identified as being potentially located in the vicinity of the Proposed Action: eastern tiger salamander (state-listed endangered), scarlet bluet (state-listed threatened), pine barrens bluet (state-listed threatened), northern long-eared bat (state and federally-listed threatened), and bald eagle (state-listed threatened). Habitats associated with these species are discussed below.

Eastern Tiger Salamanders inhabit sandy pine barren areas with temporary or permanent pools for breeding. In New York, the tiger salamander is found only on Long Island with most of the known breeding colonies restricted to the central Pine Barrens. In the absence of natural pools or ponds, it may breed in man-made depressions filled with water¹. NYSDEC regulates activities within 1,000 feet of known tiger salamander breeding sites, and implements specific habitat preservation requirements for disturbances that fall within 535-feet of a breeding pond (100% preservation), and within 1,000 feet of a breeding pond (50% preservation).

Scarlet bluets are found at acidic, sandy, coastal plain ponds with water lilies, and habitats are also known to include Bayonet Rush (*Juncus militarus*) along the shoreline. Most known habitats in New York seem to include water lilies, pickerelweed, shorelines of emergent grasses, rushes, or sedges or margins that are boggy².

Pine barrens bluets are known primarily to inhabit acidic, coastal plain ponds with sandy substrate and emergent vegetation such as Bayonet Rush (*Juncus militarus*)

¹ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7143.html>

² <https://guides.nynhp.org/scarlet-bluet/>

along the shoreline where females oviposit. Some sites also have a floating bog mat or the pond has a boggy edge³.

Northern long-eared bats spend winter hibernating in caves and mines, called hibernacula. They typically use large caves or mines with large passages and entrances; constant temperatures; and high humidity with no air currents. Northern long-eared bats roost underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of trees during summer. Males and non-reproductive females may also roost in cooler places, like caves and mines. It has also been found, rarely, roosting in structures like barns and sheds⁴.

Bald eagles prefer undisturbed areas near large lakes and reservoirs, marshes and swamps, or stretches along rivers where they can find open water and fish⁵.

The vast majority of the Proposed Action will be completed within the limits of the existing Substation, which is fenced, covered in crushed dolomite stone, and does not contain suitable habitat for the aforementioned threatened or endangered species. Work activities beyond the Substation fence will be located within dirt pathways or within the utility right of way which is primarily occupied by forbs, herbs, grasses, and shrubs.

Correspondence with the NYNHP was completed as part of a future PSEG Long Island project (Bridgehampton to Buell New 69kV Underground Cable) which indicated tiger salamander breeding ponds are located within 1,000 feet of Bridgehampton Substation. PSEG Long Island personnel consulted with NYSDEC staff to prepare a design that minimizes work activities and associated disturbance within 535 feet from known tiger salamander breeding ponds.

The only activities that will be located within 535 feet from known tiger salamander breeding ponds includes the removal and installation of guy wires at two existing utility poles (see Figure 5). These activities are expected to result in approximately 5 square feet of disturbance within an area that currently consists of low-lying vegetation (including mugwort, common mullien, Japanese honeysuckle, black huckleberry, and little bluestem). Given the minimal extents of disturbance and vegetation removal within the 535-foot buffer, there will be no significant permanent habitat loss to this species.

Based on conversations between NYSDEC Bureau of Habitat and PSEG Long Island personnel, given the minimal extents of disturbance activities which will occur within 535 feet of known tiger salamander breeding ponds, the Proposed Action will not result in a “take” as per 6 NYCRR Part 182. PSEG Long Island has submitted an application for a determination of no incidental take to NYSDEC, so formal determination can be issued for the Proposed Action. Construction activities within the 535-foot buffer area will not commence until an official determination of no “take” has been issued by the NYSDEC.

³ <https://guides.nynhp.org/pine-barrens-bluet/>

⁴ <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045>

⁵ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74052.html>

Since no clearing/trimming of trees is proposed, no permanent loss of habitat for any rare, threatened or endangered wildlife species will occur, no rare, threatened, or endangered plants were identified within the areas to be disturbed for implementation of the Proposed Action, and vegetation removal will be minor in nature, the Proposed Action will not result in significant adverse impacts to the identified threatened and endangered species.

- A detailed Sound Impact Evaluation and Assessment Study (the “Study”) was completed to evaluate the potential sound-level impact of future operational noise levels at the Substation due to the addition of the new transformer bank (see Attachment B). The observed (ambient) daytime and nighttime total sound level at the nearest receptor to the Substation was 58 dBA and 48 dBA, respectively. The sound level around the Substation, assuming full load operation of the new transformer bank, was modeled to be 58 dBA (daytime) and 48 dBA (nighttime), at the nearest receptor. Based on the Study, the Substation upgrades would not increase total sound levels above existing ambient total sound levels at the nearest receptor property, and also would not increase total sound levels beyond the NYSDEC Noise Policy Guideline Limit of 65 dBA. Therefore, operation of the Proposed Action will not result in significant adverse noise impacts.

Based on the EA and PSEG Long Island’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 need not be prepared.

For Further Information:

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