

INFORMATION ON RANGE PROPOSAL PROCESS

The Departments of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and Administrative Services (DAS) have solicited and continue to receive comments from the public regarding the proposed relocation of the Connecticut State Police (CSP) Firearms Training Facility. All of them are constructive and are welcomed. It is critical to the process to hear from you regarding this very important project. We are listening. At this point in the selection process the agencies do not have all of the information needed to respond with specificity to every question and concern about potential impacts or what future actions the state will take to avoid/mitigate those impacts. Although not all of the detailed information is available at this point in the process, the agencies would like to highlight some concerns and reemphasize points already made.

Generally speaking, the most frequent comments have been on the topics of noise, property values, soil and groundwater contamination, tax base loss, impact on traffic and wildlife, and availability of state parcels elsewhere. We also note that many of the comments received include full support of our State Troopers and their need to be the best trained and best equipped law enforcement agency and we appreciate such comments as well. Although it is early in the assessment process and we are unable to provide details at this time, we can highlight and reemphasize some key factors regarding the process and the approach the agencies plan on taking toward responding to the topics that you are identifying.

The Process

We understand the “State’s process” is very different from what many local residents are used to when development projects are being proposed at the local level. While the process may be different, the issues of analyzing and addressing potential impacts of state actions are not ignored and there is a process for evaluating the environmental impacts of state agency actions. This process is called the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) ([Sections 22a-1 through 22a-1h](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes and [Sec. 22a-la-1 through 22a-la-12](#) of the *Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies*).

As mentioned in the presentations, under CEPA there are two key factors in the law that affect site selection for a proposed project. They are 1) sites under its control and 2) reasonably available to the agencies. Existing DESPP property and other state owned land were considered as part of the initial site selection process. Reasonably available sites included non-state owned property where the land owner is a willing seller; thereby making their property reasonably available to the agencies. The site selection process included “unsolicited sites,” meaning they were submitted to the state by land owners for consideration for the relocation project. Since they were being offered to the state by willing sellers, they were deemed “reasonably available” and as such, also subject to the same vetting process as state-owned properties. Sites where the state reached out to the land owners were deemed “solicited.” There were many sites (solicited and unsolicited) that made it through the vetting process. However, many land owners were not interested in selling. The three sites, Willington - Ruby Road (unsolicited), Willington - Eldredge Mills Road (solicited), and East Windsor (unsolicited), went through the vetting process, were deemed to be reasonably available, and as a result, were subsequently carried forward to the Early Public Scoping Process under CEPA. (A full discussion about the selection process will be discussed in the Environmental Impact Evaluation [“EIE”]). The following are the three major steps in the CEPA EIE process.

Step 1: Early Public Scoping: Scoping is the gathering and assessment of information that a state agency will use to establish the breadth or scope of environmental review of a proposed project.

The scoping step for the Firearms Training Facility Relocation project started on May 5, 2015 and concluded on June 4, 2015. The agencies held two public scoping meetings to gather information and concerns from the public in both towns. State and federal agencies also submit comments when a project may be applicable to any of their regulatory authority or oversight.

Scoping occurs well before an agency conducts a detailed environmental review and therefore, little information is available to provide to the public. For further information on scoping, please see the Connecticut Council of Environmental Quality's webpage by clicking [here](#).

During the scoping process, the owner of Eldredge Mills Road site in Willington withdrew his interest; as a result it is no longer being considered by the agencies.

After scoping ends, the Environmental Impact Evaluation ("EIE") phase begins.

Step 2: Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE): The EIE step is where the comments, issues, and concerns that have been raised by the public during the scoping process (Step 1) are addressed. The EIE is a written-public document compiled by both agencies. The primary purposes of an EIE is to provide full and fair discussions of environmental impacts, inform decision makers and the public of all reasonable alternatives, and compare the impacts of the alternatives on the environment. An EIE must be clear, concise, and to the point, and written in plain language so that it may be understood by the general public.

Both agencies understand this not a typical state facility or function, and with it carries unique issues that should be addressed in the EIE. The agencies want to get this right and will be working hard to analyze the project's potential impacts.

During the development of the EIE, the agencies, along with specialized consultants, will use industry standards and methods for assessing potential impacts. At this point we cannot respond to some of the concerns being raised by the public because we feel we would be speculating, when instead we and the public need specific data and analysis to determine what the true potential impacts might be so a decision can be made accordingly.

However and generally speaking, we will be exploring specific solutions (which include comments/suggestions made by the public during scoping) to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential impacts. For example, we will put forth a substantial effort studying noise impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods by modeling the expected noise generated from the new facility to the surrounding properties. Based on the assessment of potential impacts, we would explore mitigating factors which may include but are not limited to site specific design and layout, use of existing topography, woodland buffers, and noise dampening structures, in addition to potential operational changes. Similarly, for addressing potential lead impacts, the team will explore new technologies or systems that can reclaim spent lead bullets, in addition to exploring site design and structural features to control lead bullets. We will also conduct a traffic study taking into account such things as existing road level of services, the potential trips generated by the use of the facility by Troopers and staff during peak traffic hours, and entrance sightlines.

These types of data driven studies and evaluations will be followed on other topics as well, such as land, air, and water contamination, land value, and public safety, as well as the degree of

crime deterrence and measurable economic impact of increasing the presence of Troopers in the subject communities. In addition, the EIE will identify unavoidable or irreversible impacts.

When the EIE is complete and ready, the agencies will make the document available for the public and other state, local and federal agencies, for review and comment. The official public notice of the availability of the EIE will be placed in the *Environmental Monitor* (www.ct.gov/ceq) and local newspapers. The public can sign up to receive *Environmental Monitor* notices by clicking [here](#). Hardcopies of the EIE will be made available at the town libraries and town clerks' offices in East Windsor and Willington, DESPP's Headquarters in Middletown, and DAS's offices in Hartford. Electronic copies will be available to view and download from both agencies' websites and the *Environmental Monitor* website. An electronic copy will be made available to each respective town's First Selectman's Offices for posting on their respective town's website if they so choose. Prior to the notice of the EIE, the agencies intend to discuss with each town First Selectman's office other reasonable options for notifying town residents.

The agencies, along with its consultants, will conduct a public hearing in each town during the 45-day public review and comment period. The public hearing will include a presentation and summary of the EIE and its findings and an opportunity for the public to comment on the EIE.

Step 3: Record of Decision

At the close of the EIE comment period, the agencies review all comments and prepare responses to the substantive issues raised or can modify the proposed project. DESPP would make a final decision on a preferred site and any other project elements and then prepare another document called a Record of Decision (ROD).

The ROD is submitted to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) which reviews the agency's submittal of the EIE, all comments, responses, appropriate reports, supporting documentation and the Record of Decision. OPM then determines the adequacy of the EIE and of the process and would advise DESPP of its decision.

If the document is determined to be inadequate, OPM recommends changes or requests additional information. If found to be adequate, the agencies may proceed with the project. The subsequent steps would be finalizing a purchase and sale agreement with the land owner, designing the project, obtaining applicable permits, and then construction.

For more information regarding the CEPA process, please [click here](#).

DAS and DESPP both take this project and the safety and well-being of residents and businesses located near state owned property very seriously, and we are committed to producing a complete and comprehensive work product. We embrace the process that is needed to site such a facility and will use it to make an informed decision on the future of firearms training for the State Police Troopers. The comments presented by the public as well as State agencies during the CEPA scoping are very important to us and will help us in our decisions moving forward.