

Notice of Scoping for Connecticut State Police Firearms Training Facility Relocation

Municipalities where proposed project might be located: East Windsor and Willington

Addresses of Possible Project Locations: Apothecaries Hall Road & Windsorville Road, East Windsor ("East Windsor Site"); Ruby Road, Willington ("Willington – Ruby Site"); and Eldredge Mills Road, Willington ("Willington – Eldredge Site").

Project Description: The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Division of State Police (CSP) is proposing to relocate its existing Firearms Training Facility and Program located on Nod Road in Simsbury to a new site. The proposed sites are:

- East Windsor Site: is located south of Apothecaries Hall Road, west of Windsorville Road, and east of a railroad line. The site is comprised of two parcels: parcel IDs: 048-65-007 (124.8 acres) and 057-65-001 (98 acres). Total Site acreage: 222.8 acres.
- Willington – Ruby Site: is located east of Ruby Road (Route 320) and north of Cosgrove Road. The site is comprised of two parcels: parcel IDs: 33/019-00 (315.99 acres) and 33/017-00 (10.59 acres). Total Site acreage: 326.58 acres.
- Willington – Eldredge Site: is located at the end of Eldredge Mills Road (west of Ruby Road [Route 320]) and east of River Road. The site is comprised of three parcels: parcel IDs: 33/004-00 (105.71 acres), 33/012-00 (41.7 acres), and 33/001-00 (5.61 acres). Total Site acreage: 153.02 acres.

At this point, the State has not begun the design phase, therefore the actual project layout would occur after a final site is selected and a design team is hired. However, the estimated maximum acreage needed for the main project elements is approximately 30 acres. This does not include axillary infrastructure improvements that may be necessary for the project.

The project proposes to maintain and improve the CSP Firearms Training Program to benefit DESPP's critical needs. Other state, federal, international, and host community law enforcement agencies would also utilize this facility as part of the inter-relationships DESPP has with various agencies.

The following are the major facility elements associated with this relocation project:

- Approximately 55,000 gross square feet (GSF) multipurpose training building(s). This building (or combinations of smaller buildings) would contain: classrooms to hold up to approximately 100 troopers and/or cadets; firearms simulator room; open area training room; indoor active-shooter training; gun cleaning and smithing; file storage room; staff offices; firearms vault; ammunition storage vault; recruit/staff kitchen and dining area; reloading area; target storage area; bathrooms with lockers and showers; and a garage.

- 2 Range Control Towers (approximately 1 story high)
- 1 Qualifying Pistol Range (approximately 200 ft x 170 ft)
- 1 Active Shooter Training Range (approximately 200 ft x 170 ft)
- 1 Rifle Range (approximately 300 yd x 50 yd)
- 1 Shotgun Rifle Range (approximately 100 yd x 30 yd)
- Approximately 125 parking spaces
- Well and septic systems, telecom, and electrical utilities

Project Maps:

- East Windsor Site: [General Location](#) (7.7 MB) [Aerial Parcel Map](#) (6.3 MB)
- Willington – Ruby Site: [General Location](#) (7.3 MB) [Aerial Parcel Map](#) (7.7 MB)
- Willington – Eldredge Site: [General Location](#) (7.3 MB) [Aerial Parcel Map](#) (7.7 MB)

Written comments from the public are welcomed and will be accepted until the close of business on: June 4, 2015.

There will be two Public Scoping Meetings for this project at:

DATE: May 18, 2015

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: East Windsor High School, 6 South Main Street, East Windsor, CT.

NOTES: Doors open at 6:30 PM; meeting starts at 7:00 PM and will conclude after public comments.

DATE: May 28, 2015

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Willington Town Library, 7 Ruby Road, Willington, CT.

NOTES: Doors open at 6:30 PM; meeting starts at 7:00 PM and will conclude after public comments.

Written comments and/or requests for a Public Scoping Meeting should be sent to:

Name: Jeff Bolton, Supervising Environmental Analyst
Agency: Department of Administrative Services, Division of
Construction Services

Address: 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 483

Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Fax: (860) 713-7251

E-Mail: jeffrey.bolton@ct.gov

If you have questions about the public meeting, or other questions about the scoping for this project, contact:

Name: Sgt. Shane Hassett
Agency: Connecticut State Police

Address: 1111 Country Club Road

Middletown, CT. 06457

Phone: (860) 685-8230

Fax: (860) 685-8301

E-Mail: shane.hassett@ct.gov

The agency expects to release an Environmental Impact Evaluation for this project, for public review and comment, in October, 2015.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Department of Emergency Services
&
Public Protection
Connecticut State Police
Public Information Office
1111 Country Club Road
Middletown, Connecticut 06457

Contact:
860-685-8230
DESPP.Feedback

Dr. Dora B. Schiro
Commissioner

Colonel Brian F.
Meraviglia
Deputy Commissioner
Division of State Police

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
June 5, 2015

STATE POLICE FIREARMS TRAINING FACILITY PROCESS INFORMATION

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-1a-1 through 22a-1a-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.

-END-

1. Why does the state need a firing range?

- a. All State Troopers are required to qualify prior to graduation from the Academy and requalify annually. Currently, all sworn CSP personnel receive their firearms training and credentialing at a state owned training facility in Simsbury. Law Enforcement requirements, including those of the CSP, have evolved over time from a strict marksmanship program, where Troopers would shoot at nonmoving paper targets, to a dynamic training program that balances timed qualification on multiple turning targets with combat and confidence courses. These improvements in training teach and reinforce the skills necessary to make critical decisions about when, where, and how to use deadly physical force without placing innocent lives at stake. Firearms qualifications for Troopers include the use of handguns, rifles, and shotguns and are conducted in the same weather environments and light conditions that Troopers perform their duties. This is done in order for them to effectively handle their weapons in all temperatures and weather and light conditions they may face.

2. Why can't you use or expand on the range you use now rather than build a new one?

- a. The present State Police range in Simsbury was constructed in 1947. This site is at the base of Talcott Mountain, just north of the Avon town line and located within the Farmington River flood plain and flood way. In 1962, the state purchased the range, and Firearms Training has been conducted there ever since. The facility consists of a multi-lane pistol range and a separate rifle and shotgun range.

The location of the current range makes it a prime target for the rise and fall of the Farmington River. The proximity of the Farmington River and its continuous encroachment upon the range has created conditions that make its continued use impractical. The site has had issues with flooding for decades. Over the years, minor site improvements have been made to prevent or at least mitigate the impact of annual flooding from the Farmington River, but they have not been sufficient in preventing significant damage.

The flooding in the spring of 2007 caused extensive damage to the entire facility, to both the building and outdoor range areas and resulted in significant costs including clean up, delayed use, and damaged ammunition and equipment. Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 resulted in severe damage or destruction to nearly all the repairs and improvements made after the flooding of 2007.

The direct negative impacts on the training program due to this flooding include costs to the state as high as \$400,000 per event, and last minute cancellations of training events. The training and certification cycles for all Troopers are intricate and involve long term planning and reliable use of a facility. These cancellations result in disruptions to these training cycles and the increasing severity of flooding events has only exacerbated these delays. Also, to compensate for these events, the range staff has been forced to reduce and condense these training programs: These "bare bones" programs adversely affect the training level of Troopers across the state.

3. How will the site be used? What type of structures will you build?

- a. Initial design will occur only after the site is selected. However, the major elements of this relocation project are as follows: The facility will consist of approximately 55,000

square feet of multipurpose training space. Their main uses will include classrooms for up to 100 Troopers, firearms simulators and other open space training rooms; an indoor active-shooter training space; gun cleaning and smithing space; staff offices and file storage; storage vaults; a kitchen and dining area to accommodate staff and Troopers; an ammunition reloading area; locker rooms for staff; and various smaller storage areas. The site will also include two range control buildings. There will be separate pistol, active shooter, rifle and shotgun ranges. This will allow for a more efficient use of training time than is currently possible. There will also be approximately 125 parking spaces as well as appropriate well, septic, telecommunication, and electrical systems.

4. Will other state or federal agencies be allowed to use the facility?

- a. The Training Facility is also shared with other in-state law enforcement agencies. Approximately 80% of the use of the facility is dedicated to the members of the Connecticut State Police. The other 20%, while overseen by CSP range staff, include federal, state and local law enforcement agencies with which we partner. Training together enhances our working relationships with these other agencies.

5. Will the range be open and available to the public?

- a. At this time, there are no plans to make the proposed range available to the public.

6. Will the range be in use 7 days a week and on holidays, both days and nights?

- a. The regular operating hours for the range is Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Every three years all Troopers are required to qualify under low light conditions. This activity is conducted immediately after sunset and typically concludes by 9:00 pm. There is minimal usage of the range on the weekends.

7. The state owns so much land already; why aren't any of these sites used for the range?

- a. In accordance with the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA) there are two key factors that affect site selection for a proposed project. They are sites under the control of the sponsoring agency (DESPP, in this case) and sites that are reasonably available to the agency. 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 agency. The site selection process also 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 a number of solicited sites that made it through the vetting process but were not available for sale, as well as a number of unsolicited sites that were considered but did not make it through the vetting process. The three sites, Willington - Ruby Road (unsolicited), Willington - Eldredge Mills Road (solicited), and East Windsor (unsolicited), completed 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.

8. How can you justify the expense to taxpayers?

- a. The purpose of this facility is to provide the best training environment possible for the men and women of the Connecticut State Police. The current facility cannot accommodate the full scope of the training that must be provided, its capacity is limited, and the frequently occurring cancellations due to flooding impacts credentialing. For many citizens of the State of Connecticut, CSP is the only police resource available to its communities. It is critical that every Trooper receives all of the training needed, in a facility simulating the situations they may face to ensure that they are ready to respond to your calls, and are also able to protect themselves from harm when they do.
- 9. Does the state plan to use the selected site for any purpose other than a firing range?**
 - a. There is no plan to use the selected site for any purpose other than the proposed training facility.
- 10. Will there be 24-hour security monitoring the facility? Is the town expected to pay for the monitoring?**
 - a. The town will not be responsible for any monitoring or security. While there is no formal design or plan for the proposed facility at this point, the current facility is continuously monitored by an alarm company.
- 11. Which safety precautions are being taken to protect residents from stray bullets who live nearby?**
 - a. Troopers are trained and instructed to shoot at designated targets only. They are not permitted to randomly shoot at anything other than those designated targets. Information from the EIE will inform the design of the proposed range to ensure that all areas where shooting takes place will be secure from any individuals who reside or are in the area.
- 12. How many acres does the state need to build a firing range and what does the state plan to do with the rest of the land it doesn't use for this purpose?**
 - a. About 30 acres are needed for the facility itself. This acreage does not include auxiliary infrastructure that may be necessary for the project. For example, unused portions could be utilized as visual and sound buffers between the facility and the neighboring properties. The use of any remaining land will be discussed in the EIE.
- 13. Will the state add additional facilities to the property after the range is completed?**
 - a. There are no plans to add additional facilities to the property at this time.
- 14. Why aren't the zoning board/residents of the town able to vote on whether or not this project proceeds?**
 - a. The state's process is different than the one that is used by some communities when considering development projects at the local level. Since this is a state action, it is governed by state law, and not local regulations. However, public comments were solicited at the early stages of the project and will again be invited during the EIE public comment and review stage.
- 15. Can CSP use the National Guard facility instead?**
 - a. No. The recently re-developed CT Army National Guard East Haven range was not designed to meet CSP needs and is currently being fully utilized by the National Guard.

Stones Ranch is also being fully utilized by the National Guard. The feasibility of other facilities will be addressed in the EIE.

16. Will CSP be training with automatic firearms?

- a. Most Troopers train with and use semi-automatic firearms. Fewer than 30 Troopers in highly specialized tactical units use automatic firearms and they will train occasionally, though they too predominantly train with semi-automatic firearms.

17. What, if any is the environmental impact on the air, soil, and groundwater in the land used for the firing range and surrounding properties?

- a. Such potential environmental impacts will be evaluated in great detail in the EIE. In addition, the EIE will address potential lead impacts and explore new technologies or systems to mitigate its effect by reclaiming spent lead bullets and other means.

18. What considerations will be taken to protect surrounding residential areas from excessive noise, both at night and during the day?

- a. During the EIE process, we will put forth a substantial effort to study 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 as examples, 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.

19. Will building a firing range in our town cause our home values to depreciate? Will homeowners be compensated for loss of value?

- a. Part of the EIE process includes an evaluation of the economic impact on the surrounding areas, which would include potential impact to home value.

20. Will local businesses near the range be impacted?

- a. The degree to which businesses near the site could be negatively or positively impacted will be explored in the EIE.

21. How close will the proposed range be to schools, residences, and places of worship?

- a. Part of the EIE process will further evaluate the proximity to residences, places of worship, cemeteries, hospitals, schools, daycare centers, recreational areas, and historic districts, and the degree to which they may be impacted.

22. Will the influx of Troopers using the firing range cause traffic problems?

- a. As part of the EIE process, a traffic study would be conducted which would look into 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.