



South Norwalk Electric and Water
A Municipal Utility System
Serving the Needs of the Community

ALAN E. HUTH, Interim General Manager

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V I A E – M A I L: EnvAffairsDirector@wiltonct.org

July 2, 2020

Ms. Elizabeth Craig, Chair Wilton Inland Wetlands Commission
c/o Mr. Mike Conklin, Director of Environmental Affairs
Town of Wilton, Town Annex
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

RE: Show Cause Hearing for 220 Nod Hill Road on July 9th 2020

Dear Chairwoman Craig, Mr. Conklin, and Members of the Commission:

SNEW has inspected the tree clearing work which appears to have been undertaken by the owners of 220 Nod Hill Road within the last year. As a comparison between 2019 state-flown aerial photography and current conditions show, a wide swath of trees have been removed from the rear of the residence to the shoreline area of Popes Pond (a/k/a Streets Pond) – a source of drinking water for SNEW's customers in Wilton, Norwalk and Rowayton. Unaware of this activity until notified by the Town of Wilton on June 17, 2020, SNEW believes a significant number of its own trees were removed as part of this action. Judging from wood and stumps remaining on SNEW property, trees include mature, large oaks, maples, and hickories.

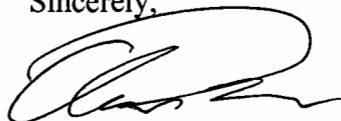
The wholesale clearing and grubbing work occurred on a hillside with slopes approaching 30%. Judging from the nearly overtopped silt fence at the bottom of the slope, soil has eroded from the Behrenses' property, and moved onto SNEW property. This un-stabilized material has now become a sedimentation threat to the highly regulated Class 1 watershed land and reservoir supply. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the new closely cropped grass on this long steep slope will provide an effective long-term vegetative cover, capable of stabilizing the soils and mimicking pre-existing hydrologic conditions of the formerly forested area. Changes in land cover, increased soil compaction, and lowered evapotranspiration rates will conspire with other impacts to reduce infiltration, increase surface run-off, and reduce the water quality in surface water flows and within the reservoir.

As the Commission is aware, undisturbed forests promote infiltration of precipitation into the ground, and help to remove impurities from flows before waters reach the reservoir. Unlike most other land uses, native forests are also self-sustaining. Fully mature trees especially provide ecosystem functions that cannot be replaced or easily duplicated by other means. The trees, the forest floor and their soils then are important and necessary elements for a healthy landscape, surrounding and protecting SNEW's reservoirs. Among other functions, forests lower levels of turbidity, color, and dissolved nutrients in the waters of Popes Pond and lend a visual character to Wilton to be enjoyed by all.

SNEW has many concerns and requests associated with the non-permitted clearing work. First and foremost, SNEW requests the Commission retain the cease and desist order, which has been issued to the owners of 220 Nod Hill Road. Secondly, SNEW requests the owners are required as part of any permit application to provide a full accounting of the work on the hillside to date. SNEW also requests that the owner re-survey and stake the common property line prior to the Commission's site walk so SNEW can re-post the property and protect it from further encroachments. Finally, SNEW requests that the Commission require the owners to replace any of the boundary markers, identified on Map #5713 from Wilton Land Records.

As the regulatory enforcement, and perhaps legal, proceedings progress, SNEW will undoubtedly have further requests and comments. If SNEW can be of any further assistance at this time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Huth', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Alan Huth
Interim General Manager

Cc: Ms. Elizabeth Larkin, Administrative Asst., via e-mail: elizabeth.larkin@wiltonct.org