

AN APPLICATION BY NORTHEAST UTILITIES : CONNECTICUT SITING
FOR THE HARTFORD ELECTRIC LIGHT
COMPANY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF :
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND : COUNCIL
PUBLIC NEED FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION
UNDERGROUND OF TWO EXISTING 345 KV
TRANSMISSION LINES AND ONE EXISTING
115 KV TRANSMISSION LINE WHICH CROSS
THE CONNECTICUT RIVER BETWEEN
MIDDLETOWN AND EAST HAMPTON AT
SCOVILL ROCK. : October 6, 1981

CONCURRING OPINION

While concurring with the Decision and Order of the Connecticut Siting Council concerning Docket No. 19, we wish to expand upon the reasons given supporting the choice of an overground alternative for this crossing of the Connecticut River. We wish also to present our view that a different overground alternative, that of C-3 as opposed to C-2 towers, better serves the mandate of the Council and the needs of the public.

We agree with the majority that cost is the pivotal factor in rejecting the Applicant's proposal to underground these lines. However, the environmental consequences of undergrounding play a somewhat larger role in this decision for us than for the Council as a whole. As the majority opinion so correctly states, the Connecticut River is a natural resource to be treasured by all the people of the state for this and future generations. No action or lack of action attributable to this Council should in any fashion despoil so priceless an asset. Thus, we share the majority's belief that the visual integrity of the lower Connecticut River Valley must be protected. However, the visually beneficial aspects of undergrounding must not obscure the transcending need to protect the entire ecological unit at hand. The potentially detrimental impacts of undergrounding upon the riverbanks and riverbed and upon the natural communities associated with them bore substantial weight in our decision to approve an overground alternative.

We further wish to express our preference for the C-3 alternative. This alternative entails three short towers on each riverbank. The resulting array of wires, we believe, is less visible and poses less danger to migrating birds.

Furthermore, while the single C-2 tower arguably reduces the visual distraction of the present arrangement, it is in the end counterproductive. The striking silhouettes of the C-2 towers will be visible over a significantly greater distance and will never be absorbed into the background. We believe the shorter C-3 towers would have intruded far less upon the profile of the river valley and been visible within a smaller area.

Therefore, we would conclude that the goal of visual harmony, insofar as it can accommodate these electrical facilities, would have been more notably advanced by the C-3 alternative.

