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August 30, 2026

VIA E-MAIL

Conservation Commission/
Inland Wetlands Agency
&
Planning and Zoning Commission
225 Center Road
Easton, CT 06612

RE: *SUPPLEMENTAL REVIEW OF REVISED PLANS & DOCUMENTS*
(PERMIT APPL.: 25-733)
Saddle Ridge Cluster Subdivision
Sport Hill Road & Cedar Hill Road, Easton, Connecticut

REMA Job #: 26-2863-EAS8

Dear Commissioners:

At the request of Citizens for Easton, Inc., REMA Ecological Services, LLC (REMA) has completed a supplemental review of additional plans, technical materials, and correspondence submitted in connection with the proposed Saddle Ridge Cluster Subdivision. This review follows REMA's February 16, 2026 Wetlands and Environmental Review and our June 1, 2026 Preliminary Review of Revised Plans & Documents.

Since those earlier submissions, the applicant has provided a written response to the environmental concerns raised by REMA, additional revisions to the subdivision plans, supplemental vernal pool mapping, a site resources inventory, and responses to



comments issued by the Commission's third-party reviewer, Tighe & Bond. Tighe & Bond has also issued an updated review dated August 28, 2026.

The purpose of this supplemental review is not to repeat the extensive analysis contained in REMA's February 16, 2026 report. Rather, it is to evaluate whether the subsequently submitted information and design revisions materially address the principal environmental concerns previously identified, and to identify those matters that, in our professional opinion, remain unresolved or require additional information before their potential effects on wetlands and watercourses can be adequately evaluated.

As with our prior reviews, REMA recognizes that the applicant has made a number of revisions that improve certain aspects of the proposal. These include modifications to individual lot layouts and grading, increased greenbelt easement widths, adjustments intended to reduce disturbance within portions of the Upland Review Area, additional native buffer plantings, preparation of a site resources inventory depicting slopes exceeding 25 percent, and preparation of mapping identifying six areas characterized as potential vernal pool habitat. These revisions provide useful additional information and, in several instances, respond constructively to concerns raised during the review process.

At the same time, review of the current materials indicates that several environmental questions identified previously have not been resolved through corresponding field investigations, hydrologic analyses, biological surveys, or other site-specific technical information. Of particular concern are: (1) the potential alteration of groundwater-supported wetland hydrology associated with Stormwater Basin 210; (2) the absence of breeding-season biological investigation of potential vernal pool habitat, including the southeastern pond-marsh complex previously identified by REMA; (3) remaining questions regarding wetland delineation documentation and associated impact accounting; and (4) the absence of baseline water-quality characterization and cumulative receiving-system analysis for sensitive headwater resources.

This supplemental review therefore focuses principally on those issues for which the additional submissions either provide new information requiring evaluation or leave substantive questions unresolved.



1.0 MATERIALS REVIEWED

In preparing this supplemental review, REMA reviewed the following additional or updated materials, together with the materials previously identified in our February 16, 2026 report:

Applicant Plans and Technical Materials

- Saddle Ridge Cluster Resubdivision, Sport Hill Road & Cedar Hill Road, Easton, Connecticut, prepared by SLR International Corporation, latest revision dated August 18, 2026, 31 sheets.
- Summary of Changes, prepared by SLR International Corporation, dated August 20, 2026.
- Vernal Pool Location Graphic, Sheets VO-1 through VO-7, prepared by SLR International Corporation, dated August 18, 2026.
- Site Resources Inventory Graphic, prepared by SLR International Corporation, dated August 17, 2026.
- SLR International Corporation response to Tighe & Bond Review Comments, Inland Wetlands Permit Application 25-733, dated August 20, 2026.
- SLR International Corporation response to REMA Ecological Services' February 16, 2026 review, dated June 1, 2026.

Third-Party Review Materials

- Tighe & Bond, Third-Party Wetlands Science and Engineering Review Comments, Inland Wetlands Permit Application 25-733, dated August 28, 2026.

Prior REMA Submissions

- REMA Ecological Services, LLC, Wetlands and Environmental Review, Saddle Ridge Cluster Subdivision, dated February 16, 2026.
- REMA Ecological Services, LLC, Preliminary Review of Revised Plans & Documents, dated June 1, 2026.



REMA also compared the current August 18, 2026 plan set with earlier plan revisions dated March 9, 2026 and May 18, 2026 where necessary to determine whether design changes materially affected issues previously identified.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF SUBSEQUENT REVISIONS AND RESPONSES

The additional materials submitted since REMA's June 1, 2026 review provide substantially more information concerning several issues raised during the public hearing process. Most notably, the applicant has now responded in writing to REMA's February review; potential vernal pool locations and associated 100-foot and 750-foot habitat areas have been mapped; slopes exceeding 25 percent and farmland soils have been depicted on a site resources inventory; additional buffer plantings and greenbelt protections have been incorporated; and certain lot grading and disturbance limits have been modified.

Accordingly, REMA no longer characterizes the record as lacking responses to the environmental concerns previously raised. The more appropriate question at this stage is whether the responses and revisions are supported by sufficient site-specific information to resolve the underlying environmental issues.

Based upon our review, several earlier concerns have been addressed in whole or in part through plan revisions or additional documentation. Others, however, have principally been answered through professional opinion, desktop analysis, or proposed permit conditions rather than through field investigations or quantitative analyses that would allow the potential magnitude of wetland and watercourse impacts to be more fully evaluated. The following sections address those remaining issues.

3.0 STORMWATER BASIN 210 AND HEADWATER WETLAND HYDROLOGY

3.1 Prior REMA Concern

REMA's February 16, 2026 review identified Stormwater Basin 210 as presenting a specific potential hydrologic impact to the adjacent headwater wetland. The concern was not limited to stormwater treatment efficiency or the quality of water ultimately



discharged from the basin. Rather, it involved the physical relationship between the depth of the proposed basin excavation, its underdrain system, the adjacent wetland, and the shallow groundwater system that supports wetland hydrology.

The February review concluded that excavation of Basin 210 to elevations substantially below the adjacent wetland surface, combined with installation of an underdrain, created a substantial likelihood that shallow groundwater presently moving toward the wetland would instead be intercepted by the proposed stormwater facility. REMA therefore recommended that the applicant provide site-specific information sufficient to demonstrate that construction of the basin would not adversely alter the wetland's existing hydroperiod.

3.2 Review of Current Basin 210 Design

REMA has compared the Basin 210 configuration depicted on the March 9, May 18, and August 18, 2026 plan sets. Based upon this comparison, the hydrologically significant components of Basin 210 remain essentially unchanged.

The current plans continue to depict a basin bottom at approximately Elevation 416.0 and a four-inch perforated underdrain at approximately Elevation 413.25. The outlet pipe invert is likewise shown at Elevation 413.25. The basin remains deeply excavated immediately adjacent to and east of the headwater wetland.

SLR's August 20, 2026 Summary of Changes states that the "storm system design into Basin 210" was modified to limit excavation depths by relocating the incoming discharge farther upslope within the basin. REMA recognizes that change. However, comparison of the March 9, May 18, and August 18 plan sets indicates that this modification does not materially alter the components that formed the basis of REMA's original hydrologic concern. The basin bottom, underdrain and outlet elevations, relationship of the basin to the adjacent wetland, and ultimate discharge configuration remain substantially unchanged.



Accordingly, the modifications to the storm drainage entering Basin 210 should not be interpreted as resolving the groundwater-interception issue identified in REMA's February review.

3.3 Interception and Redistribution of Headwater Wetland Hydrology

The adjacent wetland occurs in a headwater position and is situated immediately downslope and west of Basin 210. Under existing conditions, precipitation infiltrating the surrounding upland and hillside can move laterally through shallow glacial till and contribute diffuse groundwater and subsurface flow to the upper portion of the wetland.

Excavation of Basin 210 and installation of an underdrain substantially below the adjacent wetland elevation create an artificial lower-elevation drainage feature within this shallow groundwater system. Water that presently moves diffusely toward the wetland may therefore be intercepted by the basin excavation and/or underdrain and conveyed through the stormwater system.

An important aspect of this concern is the location at which that intercepted water is ultimately returned to the wetland system. Based upon REMA's plan review, the Basin 210 discharge occurs approximately 275 feet or more downgradient from the head of the wetland. Consequently, water intercepted near the upper portion of the wetland would not simply be collected and returned at approximately the same hydrologic position. Instead, it would be conveyed past a substantial intervening portion of the wetland and discharged farther downgradient.

This distinction is important. Maintenance of wetland hydrology is not determined solely by whether an equivalent volume of water is ultimately discharged somewhere within the same wetland system. Wetland hydroperiod is also controlled by the location, timing, duration, and distribution of groundwater and surface-water inputs. Diffuse shallow groundwater discharge into the head of a wetland cannot necessarily be replaced functionally by a concentrated discharge occurring hundreds of feet farther downgradient.



3.4 Wetland Area Potentially Subject to Hydrologic Alteration

Based upon the configuration of the wetland, Basin 210, surrounding topography, and the location of the proposed discharge, REMA conservatively estimates that approximately 21,700 square feet, or approximately 0.50 acre, of the headwater wetland lies within the area most directly susceptible to reduced groundwater contribution and alteration of existing hydroperiod.

This estimate is intentionally conservative and does not encompass the entire wetland. REMA recognizes that additional surface-water and groundwater inputs enter the wetland from the west and southwest and would continue following development. Those inputs may sustain portions of the wetland independently of Basin 210.

The approximately 21,700-square-foot estimate therefore represents the portion of the wetland that, in REMA's professional judgment, is most directly at risk from interception and downgradient redistribution of shallow groundwater associated with Basin 210. The actual area affected could be greater or lesser depending upon groundwater gradients, seasonal water-table elevations, subsurface flow pathways, soil and bedrock conditions, and the relative contribution of other water sources.

These uncertainties are precisely why site-specific hydrologic information is necessary.

3.5 Absence of Water-Budget or Hydrogeologic Demonstration

Despite the additional submissions and plan revisions, REMA has not identified a water-budget analysis, groundwater monitoring program, piezometric investigation, site-specific hydrogeologic model, or comparable analysis demonstrating that construction and operation of Basin 210 will maintain existing hydrologic conditions within the adjacent headwater wetland.

In particular, the record does not appear to quantify:

- the existing groundwater contribution to the upper portion of the wetland;
- the quantity of shallow groundwater potentially intercepted by the basin excavation and underdrain;



- seasonal groundwater elevations and gradients between the proposed basin and wetland;
- changes in the duration and depth of wetland saturation resulting from interception;
- the extent to which the approximately 275-foot intervening wetland reach would continue to receive its existing groundwater contribution; or
- whether other hydrologic inputs would be sufficient to compensate for groundwater redirected by Basin 210.

Without this information, the present record does not demonstrate that the existing hydroperiod of the potentially affected wetland area will be maintained following construction of Basin 210.

This issue should also be distinguished from stormwater peak-flow management. Demonstrating that post-development peak discharges are controlled, or that intercepted water ultimately reaches a downgradient portion of the wetland, does not demonstrate that the groundwater-supported hydrologic regime of the upper wetland will remain unchanged.

3.6 Conclusion Regarding Basin 210

The additional plans and responses submitted since REMA's February review do not resolve the principal hydrologic concern associated with Basin 210. Although modifications have been made to the stormwater conveyance entering the basin, the hydrologically consequential features of the basin itself remain substantially unchanged. The basin continues to be excavated below the elevation of the adjacent headwater wetland, continues to incorporate a low-elevation perforated underdrain, and continues to convey water to a discharge location approximately 275 feet or more downgradient from the head of the wetland.

REMA conservatively estimates that approximately 21,700 square feet of the headwater wetland may be susceptible to reduced groundwater contribution and corresponding alteration of wetland hydroperiod. No site-specific water-budget or hydrogeologic analysis has been provided demonstrating that the existing hydrologic regime of this



portion of the wetland will be maintained following construction. Accordingly, REMA considers the potential indirect physical impact of Basin 210 on the adjacent headwater wetland to remain unresolved.

4.0 VERNAL POOL HABITAT AND SOUTHEASTERN POND-MARSH COMPLEX

4.1 Subsequent Vernal Pool Mapping

REMA's February 16, 2026 review identified uncertainty regarding the presence and extent of vernal pool habitat on the property. At that time, the ecological investigations contained in the record had been conducted primarily outside the spring amphibian breeding season, and no breeding-season vernal pool survey had been performed.

Since that review, SLR has prepared a Vernal Pool Location Graphic identifying six areas, designated Vernal Pools A through F, as potential vernal pool habitat. The August 18, 2026 graphic depicts 100-foot Vernal Pool Envelopes and 750-foot Critical Terrestrial Habitat areas surrounding each of these potential pools and calculates the percentage of proposed disturbance occurring within those areas.

This additional mapping is useful and partially responds to REMA's earlier concern regarding the absence of any spatial assessment of potential vernal pool habitat. It provides a substantially clearer understanding of where potential breeding habitats may occur in relation to the proposed development.

However, the identification and mapping of potential pool locations should be distinguished from biological verification of vernal pool function.

4.2 Absence of Breeding-Season Biological Surveys

The current record confirms that no formal breeding-season vernal pool survey has been conducted on the property.



Earlier in the review process, Tighe & Bond recommended that the applicant perform a vernal pool survey of the entire site during the amphibian breeding season. The applicant subsequently indicated that it would undertake such a study if required as a condition of approval. The subsequent record instead contains a desktop analysis identifying the six potential pools shown on the August mapping, but does not include the recommended breeding-season field investigation.

The distinction is significant. Desktop mapping can identify depressional areas and other locations having physical characteristics consistent with potential vernal pool habitat, but it does not establish whether obligate vernal pool species actually breed within those areas or whether successful reproduction occurs.

No information presently identified in the record documents:

- spring egg-mass surveys for wood frog or mole salamanders;
- breeding-season calling surveys;
- larval surveys;
- successful emergence or recruitment;
- seasonal hydroperiod observations specifically directed toward amphibian reproduction; or
- systematic evaluation of fish presence or predatory fish access within potentially suitable breeding habitats.

Therefore, the biological function of the six mapped potential vernal pools remains largely inferred from physical characteristics, surrounding habitat, and prior incidental observations rather than established through breeding-season field investigation.

4.3 Southeastern Pond–Marsh Complex

A separate concern raised in REMA’s February review involved the southeastern pond–marsh complex.

This concern should not be considered resolved simply by identification of the six potential vernal pools shown on the subsequent desktop mapping. REMA previously noted that the southeastern aquatic system contains a combination of open water,



emergent marsh, shallow vegetated margins, and adjoining forested wetland. The available information did not establish pond depth, fish presence, seasonal connectivity of shallow marginal areas to deeper water, or spring amphibian use.

From an ecological standpoint, the presence of permanent open water or even fish within deeper portions of a pond does not necessarily preclude vernal-pool-type breeding habitat elsewhere within the same aquatic system. Shallow vegetated margins, seasonally isolated pockets, flooded emergent vegetation, or other areas having limited access by predatory fish can provide breeding and larval-development habitat for wood frogs and mole salamanders even where deeper portions of the larger pond are unsuitable.

REMA therefore specifically raised the possibility that portions of the southeastern pond-marsh complex could provide embedded or marginal breeding habitat for obligate vernal pool species.

The subsequent materials reviewed by REMA do not appear to directly evaluate this question.

No spring biological inventory has been provided documenting whether wood frog or spotted salamander egg masses or larvae occur within the pond margins or associated emergent marsh. Similarly, no fish-community assessment or seasonal hydrologic evaluation has been provided demonstrating that all shallow portions of the pond are continuously accessible to fish or otherwise unsuitable for obligate amphibian reproduction.

Therefore, the specific ecological question raised by REMA concerning the southeastern pond-marsh complex remains unresolved.

4.4 Relationship to Applicant and Third-Party Review Conclusions

The applicant has provided professional opinions regarding the probable functional value of several of the six mapped potential pools. In particular, SLR considers potential Pools C, D, and E to have been substantially affected by historic agricultural activity and therefore unlikely to represent productive vernal pool habitat.



The available record provides some support for distinguishing among these potential pools. Tighe & Bond, for example, determined that historic sedimentation and surrounding land use substantially diminish the conservation importance of potential Pool D and did not recommend additional protection for that feature. Similarly, Tighe & Bond concluded that existing disturbance within much of the Critical Terrestrial Habitat associated with Pool C reduces the significance of achieving the generally recommended 75-percent terrestrial habitat preservation threshold at that location.

REMA does not disagree that existing site disturbance is relevant when evaluating ecological value and conservation priority.

However, existing disturbance does not itself establish the absence of breeding activity. This distinction is particularly relevant to potential Pool E. Tighe & Bond specifically questioned SLR's conclusion that Pool E is unlikely to provide vernal pool function and noted that SLR's characterization of limited mature forest within its Critical Terrestrial Habitat is inconsistent with the SSES Wetland Assessment, which describes dense canopy within this portion of Wetland 1 and mature second-growth woodland over much of the surrounding upland. Tighe & Bond therefore concluded that a final determination of the habitat function of Pool E may require a vernal pool survey during the amphibian breeding season.

4.5 Relationship to the Receiving Water System

The unresolved biological status of the southeastern pond-marsh complex is also relevant because this system functions as a receiving area for multiple proposed stormwater discharges.

REMA's concern is not that the presence of vernal pool species would automatically preclude stormwater discharge to the wetland system. Rather, the biological characteristics of the receiving system are relevant to determining its sensitivity to changes in water quality, sediment loading, temperature, hydrology, and other post-development conditions.

At present, two important categories of information remain absent:



1. the biological information necessary to determine whether obligate vernal pool species utilize portions of the southeastern pond–marsh complex for breeding and successful reproduction; and
2. baseline water-quality information necessary to characterize the existing condition of the receiving pond and wetland system.

The combination of these uncertainties limits the ability to evaluate the ecological consequences of introducing multiple stormwater discharges into this headwater aquatic system.

The water-quality component of this concern is addressed further in Section 6.0 of this review.

4.6 Conclusion Regarding Vernal Pool and Amphibian Habitat

The August vernal pool mapping represents a meaningful improvement to the environmental record and provides useful information regarding the spatial relationship between the proposed development and six areas identified as potential vernal pool habitat. It does not, however, constitute a breeding-season vernal pool survey.

The current record continues to lack biological field data establishing the presence or absence of obligate amphibian breeding within the mapped potential pools, and Tighe & Bond itself has identified remaining uncertainty regarding potential Pool E.

More importantly for REMA’s prior review, the subsequent materials do not appear to directly resolve the question of whether shallow vegetated portions of the southeastern pond–marsh complex provide embedded or marginal breeding habitat for wood frog, spotted salamander, or other pool-dependent amphibians.

Given the identification of site wetlands as containing or having the potential to contain large amphibian populations, the prior identification of wood frog within the project record, the structural complexity of the southeastern pond–marsh system, and the proposed discharge of stormwater to this headwater receiving system, REMA considers



this biological information relevant to a complete assessment of potential wetland and watercourse impacts.

Consequently, the vernal pool and amphibian habitat issue has been partially addressed through additional mapping, but the principal biological uncertainty identified in REMA's February review remains unresolved.

5.0 WETLAND DELINEATION DOCUMENTATION AND IMPACT ACCOUNTING

5.1 Background

REMA's February 16, 2026 review raised concerns regarding the age, documentation, and subsequent verification of the wetland delineation used as the basis for the proposed development plans.

The original wetland delineation was completed by Soil Science and Environmental Services, Inc. (SSES) in May 2008. During the current application process, portions of the wetland boundary were reportedly reflagged and field-checked by SSES in 2025. The applicant has subsequently represented that the wetland lines shown on the current plans reflect this more recent verification effort.

REMA recognizes that field verification of an earlier delineation can be an appropriate means of confirming wetland boundaries where existing site conditions support that determination. The remaining concern is therefore not simply the age of the original delineation, but whether the current administrative record adequately documents which boundaries were verified, which were modified, and how those changes relate to the wetland impact calculations now before the Commission.

5.2 Inconsistent Description of Current Wetland Delineation

The current August 18, 2026 plan set continues to state in General Note 6 that: "Inland wetlands and watercourses on site were delineated in the field by Soil Science and Environmental Services, Inc. in May 2008."



This notation does not identify the subsequent 2025 field verification effort or explain the relationship between the original 2008 delineation and the wetland boundaries presently depicted on the plans.

This is significant because comparison of successive plan sets indicates that portions of the depicted wetland boundary have changed during the application review process, including areas associated with the proposed roadway crossing. The issue is not whether those revisions are necessarily incorrect. Wetland boundaries may appropriately be adjusted following field verification, survey correction, or clarification of flag locations. However, where the mapped boundary changes during the permitting process, the basis for the revision should be sufficiently documented so that the Commission can understand which boundary represents current field conditions and how the corresponding regulated-area calculations were derived.

5.3 Change in Reported Wetland Crossing Impact

The effect of the changing wetland depiction is illustrated by the proposed roadway crossing.

As identified in REMA's June 1, 2026 review, the March 2026 plans reported approximately 3,475 square feet of wetland impact associated with the roadway crossing, whereas the May 18, 2026 plans reported approximately 4,455 square feet of wetland impact at the same crossing.

This represents an increase of approximately 980 square feet, or approximately 28 percent, in the reported direct wetland impact. The increase does not by itself establish that additional design-related disturbance was created. It may reflect changes in wetland boundary location, changes in grading or roadway geometry, revised impact accounting, or some combination of these factors. However, REMA has not identified documentation that clearly reconciles the change.



The current record would therefore benefit from a concise explanation identifying:

- which wetland flags or boundary segments were confirmed during the 2025 field verification;
- which flags or boundary segments, if any, were relocated, added, or otherwise modified;
- whether the increased roadway-crossing impact results from revised wetland delineation, revised project design, revised impact calculation methodology, or a combination thereof; and
- confirmation that the wetland and Upland Review Area impact totals presently relied upon by the applicant correspond to the current August 18, 2026 plan set.

5.4 Importance to the Current Review

Accurate wetland delineation and impact accounting are fundamental to evaluation of the application because the wetland boundary establishes both the extent of direct regulated activity and the location of the associated Upland Review Area.

Where the wetland line changes, corresponding calculations of direct wetland impact, URA disturbance, buffer width, and proximity of development to regulated resources may also change.

For this reason, REMA does not consider the issue to be merely a plan-note discrepancy. The current plans should clearly identify the delineation upon which the application is based and provide sufficient documentation to allow the Commission to reconcile the current wetland boundary with the field verification effort and with the impact calculations presented during earlier stages of the application.

5.5 Conclusion Regarding Wetland Delineation and Impact Accounting

The applicant has provided information indicating that portions of the original 2008 wetland delineation were field-verified during 2025. This provides more current field confirmation than reliance upon the original delineation alone.



However, the August 18, 2026 plans continue to identify May 2008 as the date of wetland delineation, while portions of the mapped wetland boundary and the corresponding reported wetland impacts have changed during the review process.

Most notably, the reported direct wetland impact at the proposed roadway crossing increased from approximately 3,475 square feet in March 2026 to approximately 4,455 square feet in May 2026.

REMA has not identified a clear reconciliation of the field verification, revised boundary mapping, and resulting impact calculations. Accordingly, this issue has been partially addressed but remains insufficiently documented in the present record.

6.0 WATER QUALITY AND SOUTHEASTERN HEADWATER RECEIVING SYSTEM

6.1 Prior REMA Concern

REMA's February 16, 2026 review identified the southeastern pond–wetland complex as a sensitive headwater receiving system subject to multiple proposed stormwater discharges and surrounding residential development.

The concern was not limited to whether individual stormwater facilities satisfied applicable design criteria. Rather, REMA questioned whether the existing ecological and water-quality condition of the receiving system had been adequately characterized and whether the cumulative effects of introducing multiple post-development discharges could be evaluated from the information contained in the record.

The southeastern system includes open water, emergent marsh, shallow vegetated margins, forested wetland, and downstream surface-water connectivity. As discussed in Section 4.0 of this supplemental review, portions of this system also remain insufficiently evaluated with respect to potential amphibian breeding function.



6.2 Absence of Baseline Water-Quality Characterization

REMA has not identified any subsequently submitted baseline water-quality study for the southeastern pond and associated headwater wetland system.

The record therefore continues to lack pre-development characterization of parameters including nitrogen and phosphorus, suspended sediment or turbidity, temperature, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and pH. Together, these parameters would provide useful baseline information concerning trophic condition, sediment and nutrient status, thermal regime, oxygen availability, and the overall existing condition of the aquatic receiving system.

The significance of baseline information is not that post-development conditions must remain numerically identical to every pre-development measurement. Rather, without an understanding of existing conditions, there is no quantitative reference against which future changes can be compared.

In the absence of baseline data, it becomes difficult to determine whether predicted pollutant reductions are sufficient to protect the particular receiving resource, whether incremental changes occur following development, or whether observed future changes represent pre-existing conditions or development-related effects.

6.3 Receiving-System Sensitivity

The importance of baseline characterization is heightened by the nature of the receiving system. The southeastern pond and wetland complex occurs near the head of the drainage network. Unlike a larger downstream river or lake receiving substantial upstream flow, a headwater system generally has comparatively limited dilution and assimilative capacity. Inputs generated within the project site therefore enter the aquatic system close to their point of origin.

The available wetland assessments also identify wildlife habitat as an important function of portions of this wetland system. As discussed previously, the biological use of shallow



pond margins and associated wetland areas by pool-breeding amphibians has not been established through spring biological surveys.

Consequently, the present record does not fully establish either:

1. the existing physicochemical condition of the receiving system; or
2. the complete biological sensitivity of that system.

These two informational gaps are related. The level of water-quality protection necessary for a receiving water is properly considered in the context of the ecological functions and organisms that the resource supports.

6.4 Multiple Stormwater Discharges

The current development continues to direct multiple stormwater discharges toward wetlands and the southeastern pond-wetland receiving system.

REMA recognizes that the current plans incorporate stormwater treatment practices, including bioretention/filtration components, sediment-management features, and other controls intended to comply with contemporary stormwater design standards.

The existence of such treatment practices is relevant and should be acknowledged. However, compliance with design criteria for individual stormwater facilities does not, by itself, characterize the existing receiving water or demonstrate the cumulative response of that receiving system to multiple discharges.

The environmental question is therefore broader than whether each basin has been designed to provide a specified treatment volume or pollutant-removal function. It is whether the combined post-development hydrologic and water-quality inputs have been adequately evaluated relative to their potential to alter the physical, chemical, and biological functions of the receiving wetland and pond system.

REMA has not identified a receiving-water analysis that evaluates these combined effects relative to documented existing conditions.



6.5 Relationship Between Current Plans and Drainage Documentation

An additional documentation issue warrants clarification. Tighe & Bond's August 28, 2026 review identifies the current subdivision plans as revised through August 18, 2026. However, its Basis of Review identifies the Saddle Ridge Cluster Subdivision Drainage Report as having been revised through March 9, 2026.

The site plans have undergone additional revisions since March, including the May 18 and August 18 plan revisions and associated changes to lot configuration, disturbance limits, and portions of the stormwater system.

REMA has not identified a Drainage Report revised subsequent to March 9, 2026 that expressly incorporates the May 18 and August 18 plan revisions. Therefore, it is not clear from the materials reviewed whether the drainage-area delineations, routing calculations, storage volumes, water-quality calculations, and related stormwater analyses contained in the March report remain fully representative of the current August 18, 2026 development plan.

This does not establish that the existing drainage calculations are incorrect. Certain revisions may have little or no effect upon the underlying hydrologic calculations, and supplemental calculations may exist elsewhere in the record.

However, because the current plans post-date the drainage report identified by the Commission's third-party reviewer, the applicant should clarify whether the March 9, 2026 drainage analysis remains fully applicable to the August 18, 2026 design and, if so, provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate that relationship.

6.6 Monitoring as a Substitute for Pre-Approval Characterization

Post-construction water-quality monitoring can be an important component of permit compliance and long-term resource protection. Monitoring can identify trends, verify performance of stormwater systems, and provide a basis for corrective action if unforeseen impacts occur.



However, post-development monitoring serves a different purpose from pre-development baseline characterization.

Monitoring undertaken only after development cannot independently reconstruct the original condition of the receiving system. Similarly, a monitoring condition does not itself provide the information necessary to evaluate existing water quality or ecological sensitivity before construction occurs.

For this reason, REMA continues to distinguish between:

- baseline information used to characterize the resource and inform the Commission's evaluation of potential impacts; and
- post-approval monitoring used to determine whether an approved project is performing as anticipated.

The legal significance of that distinction, including the appropriate scope of permit conditions, is ultimately a matter for the Commission and its counsel and is discussed further in Section 8.0.

6.7 Conclusion Regarding Water Quality and the Receiving System

The additional submissions provide further stormwater design information and reflect continued refinement of the proposed development. However, REMA has not identified baseline water-quality characterization of the southeastern pond-wetland complex or a cumulative receiving-system analysis evaluating the effects of multiple stormwater discharges relative to existing environmental conditions.

In addition, the latest drainage report identified in Tighe & Bond's August 28, 2026 review is dated March 9, 2026, while the current development plans were subsequently revised through August 18, 2026. Clarification is therefore warranted as to whether the existing drainage and water-quality analyses fully correspond to the current plan configuration.

When considered together with the unresolved biological characterization of the southeastern pond-marsh system discussed in Section 4.0, REMA concludes that the



existing record does not yet provide a complete characterization of the receiving resource against which potential post-development water-quality effects can be evaluated.

7.0 FEASIBLE AND PRUDENT ALTERNATIVES

REMA's February 16, 2026 review identified potential alternative access concepts from Westport Road and Silver Hill Road and noted that the record at that time did not contain engineering evaluations demonstrating that those alternatives were infeasible or imprudent.

In its June 1, 2026 response to REMA, SLR subsequently evaluated both concepts using preliminary roadway layouts and concluded that neither represented a preferable alternative to the currently proposed access.

REMA acknowledges that this additional work materially responds to the earlier concern that the alternative access concepts had not been evaluated.

However, the alternatives as presented appear to rely primarily upon relatively direct roadway alignments and conventional grading assumptions. The materials reviewed by REMA do not appear to document whether the applicant evaluated additional avoidance and minimization techniques that might reduce the impacts attributed to those alternatives, including localized retaining structures, reduced grading limits, contour-responsive horizontal alignment, constrained roadway sections where permissible, or other site-specific engineering measures.

For example, the Westport Road concept evaluated by SLR follows an alignment that results in substantial wetland and pond disturbance and encounters steep existing slopes. The analysis demonstrates that this particular configuration would result in greater regulated-resource impacts than the applicant's preferred crossing. It does not necessarily demonstrate that all practicable configurations using the same general access corridor would produce the same result.

Similarly, SLR identified substantial practical constraints associated with the Silver Hill Road concept, including the length of additional roadway, existing agricultural use,



wetland disturbance, and additional stormwater infrastructure. These considerations materially reduce the apparent practicality of that alternative and should be recognized.

Therefore, REMA considers the feasible and prudent alternatives issue to have been substantially addressed compared with the record available at the time of our February review. We nevertheless note that the evaluations presented appear to test particular roadway configurations rather than document a broader iterative avoidance and minimization analysis of the alternative access corridors.

Given the additional information now provided and the comparative strength of other unresolved environmental issues discussed in this supplemental review, REMA does not consider alternative access to be a principal focus of the present supplemental comments.

8.0 SUFFICIENCY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD

8.1 Purpose of This Discussion

The remaining concerns identified in this supplemental review are not simply requests for additional technical detail. In several instances, the missing information relates directly to the ability to determine whether proposed regulated activities may physically alter wetlands or watercourses.

REMA recognizes that questions concerning the legal sufficiency of an application, the evidentiary burden applicable to the applicant, and the permissible use of conditions of approval are ultimately matters for the Commission and its legal counsel. Nevertheless, because the unresolved technical issues discussed in this report bear directly upon the information available to the Commission when making its decision, several Connecticut Supreme Court decisions provide relevant context.

In particular, *Unistar Properties, LLC v. Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission*, 293 Conn. 93 (2009), and *Finley v. Inland Wetlands Commission*, 289 Conn. 12 (2008), address circumstances in which information necessary to evaluate a wetlands application was either absent from the record or deferred through conditions of approval.



8.2 Unistar Properties – Missing Information Necessary to Agency Review

In *Unistar Properties, LLC v. Conservation & Inland Wetlands Commission*, the Putnam Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission denied a wetlands application, without prejudice, as incomplete. Among the information the Commission determined was missing were a sufficiently detailed wildlife inventory and an analysis of alternatives. The applicant argued, in part, that the requested wildlife information was unnecessary because its consultants had concluded that the proposed development would not adversely affect the physical characteristics of the wetlands.

The Connecticut Supreme Court upheld the Commission's decision. Of relevance here, the Court recognized that the ultimate determination regarding potential wetland impacts rests with the wetlands agency rather than with the applicant. Where information contemplated by the applicable regulatory framework is reasonably necessary for the agency to evaluate those impacts, an applicant's professional conclusion that no adverse impact will occur does not necessarily substitute for the underlying information needed by the agency to make its own determination.

REMA does not suggest that Unistar automatically dictates the disposition of the present application. The facts, regulations, and administrative record in each proceeding must be considered independently, and their legal application is appropriately determined by the Commission and its counsel.

The case is relevant, however, to the distinction between an applicant providing an opinion that an impact is unlikely and providing the underlying information necessary for the Commission to independently evaluate that conclusion.

8.3 Finley – Conditions of Approval and Information Needed Before Approval

Finley v. Inland Wetlands Commission addresses a related but different issue. In *Finley*, the Connecticut Supreme Court considered an approval that was subject to several conditions requiring additional plans and technical information after the permit had been granted. The Court recognized that inland wetlands agencies have authority to impose reasonable conditions on permits. However, it distinguished appropriate



conditions intended to implement, mitigate, or safeguard an otherwise adequately supported approval from conditions that effectively postpone determination of whether the project complies with applicable wetlands requirements in the first instance.

The Court concluded that a wetlands approval must be supported by substantial evidence demonstrating compliance with the applicable regulatory standards at the time the decision is made. A condition of approval cannot simply leave unresolved a question that must first be answered in order to determine whether the regulated activity should be approved.

Again, REMA offers no legal opinion regarding how Finley should be applied to this application. That determination rests with the Commission and its counsel.

The decision is nevertheless relevant where an unresolved environmental issue is proposed to be addressed through investigation or monitoring only after approval.

8.4 Application to the Remaining Technical Questions

The distinction discussed in Unistar and Finley is particularly relevant to two issues identified in this supplemental review.

Stormwater Basin 210

The applicant has expressed the opinion that Basin 210 will not result in an adverse hydrologic impact to the adjacent headwater wetland. However, no site-specific water-budget analysis, groundwater monitoring, piezometric investigation, or comparable hydrogeologic evaluation has been provided demonstrating that conclusion.

As discussed in Section 3.0, the basin and underdrain occur at elevations capable of intercepting shallow groundwater presently contributing to the adjacent wetland, while the resulting discharge occurs approximately 275 feet or more downgradient from the head of that wetland. REMA conservatively estimates that approximately 21,700 square feet of wetland may be susceptible to reduced groundwater contribution and alteration of hydroperiod.



The unresolved question is therefore not simply whether the applicant believes an impact will occur. The more fundamental question is whether sufficient information exists in the present record for the Commission to independently determine whether the existing hydrologic regime of the wetland will be maintained.

Vernal Pool and Pond–Marsh Habitat

A similar distinction applies to potential vernal pool habitat. The applicant has prepared useful desktop mapping identifying six potential vernal pool areas and has provided professional opinions regarding their likely functional value. However, no formal breeding-season vernal pool survey has been completed.

More specifically, the question previously raised by REMA regarding potential embedded or marginal breeding habitat within the southeastern pond–marsh complex remains unanswered through seasonal biological investigation. The record does not establish whether obligate amphibian species breed within shallow vegetated portions of this receiving system, whether fish occupy or have access to those areas during the breeding season, or whether successful larval development occurs.

Earlier in the review process, completion of a vernal pool survey was discussed as a potential condition of approval. From an environmental-review standpoint, however, there is an important distinction between monitoring a resource after its biological function has been adequately characterized and conducting the initial investigation necessary to determine what ecological function is present.

If biological use of the pond–marsh complex is material to the Commission's determination of potential wetland impacts, the question for the Commission and its counsel is whether that information should be established before the application is acted upon rather than deferred until after approval.

8.5 Baseline Water Quality Presents a Related Question

The proposed use of post-approval monitoring to address water quality raises a similar, although not identical, issue.



REMA supports appropriately designed post-construction monitoring where it is used to verify performance and identify unforeseen changes. However, such monitoring is not equivalent to pre-development characterization.

If water-quality monitoring begins only after construction, it cannot independently establish the pre-development nutrient, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, or other conditions that existed within the receiving pond-wetland system before disturbance.

Accordingly, the Commission may wish to distinguish between information needed to characterize existing environmental conditions and permit informed evaluation of potential impacts, and monitoring intended to confirm compliance after an adequately supported permit decision has already been made.

8.6 Commission Determination

REMA does not suggest that every remaining uncertainty identified during technical review necessarily renders an application incomplete. Environmental review invariably involves professional judgment, and absolute certainty is neither attainable nor ordinarily required.

The relevant distinction is whether the information presently available is sufficient to permit a reasoned determination regarding the probability and significance of impacts to regulated wetlands and watercourses.

In the present case, the applicant has supplied substantial additional information and has responded to many concerns raised throughout the review process. Nevertheless, several questions identified in this supplemental review involve matters that cannot readily be resolved through plan interpretation or professional opinion alone.

Most notably:

- the potential interception and redistribution of groundwater associated with Basin 210 has not been evaluated through a site-specific water-budget or hydrogeologic analysis;



- the biological function of potential vernal pool habitat has not been verified through breeding-season investigation, including the specific question of potential obligate amphibian use of the southeastern pond–marsh complex;
- baseline water-quality conditions of that same receiving system remain undocumented; and
- wetland delineation revisions and corresponding impact calculations have not been fully reconciled in the current record.

Whether these informational gaps are sufficiently material to affect the completeness or approvability of the application is a determination for the Commission, with advice from its legal counsel.

From an environmental and ecological standpoint, REMA considers the Basin 210 hydrologic analysis and the unresolved breeding-season habitat evaluation to involve information directly relevant to determining the potential for physical alteration of regulated wetland resources. Therefore, REMA recommends that these technical questions be resolved before the Commission reaches its final determination regarding potential wetland and watercourse impacts.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REMA has reviewed the additional plans, technical materials, and responses submitted since our February 16 and June 1, 2026 reviews of the proposed Saddle Ridge Cluster Subdivision.

The environmental record has developed substantially since REMA’s earlier reviews. The applicant has reduced the overall lot count, expanded portions of the proposed open space, modified several lot layouts and disturbance limits, increased greenbelt protections, added or revised native buffer plantings, prepared a site resources inventory, mapped six areas of potential vernal pool habitat, and provided written responses to concerns previously raised by REMA and the Commission’s third-party reviewer.

These changes should be recognized. Several matters identified earlier in the review process have been addressed or substantially narrowed. In particular, REMA considers



the feasible and prudent alternatives issue to have been materially advanced through the applicant's subsequent engineering evaluations, even though additional avoidance-oriented design techniques might theoretically have been explored. REMA does not consider that issue to be a principal focus of these supplemental comments.

Similarly, the August vernal pool mapping provides useful information regarding the spatial relationship between potential breeding habitats and the proposed development, and revisions to buffer plantings, greenbelt easements, and selected lot disturbance areas represent improvements over earlier plans.

The present review therefore does not suggest that the application has remained static or that the applicant has failed to respond to concerns raised during the public hearing process. Nevertheless, several environmental questions remain insufficiently resolved in the current record.

9.1 Stormwater Basin 210

The most significant unresolved hydrologic concern involves Stormwater Basin 210.

Comparison of the March 9, May 18, and August 18, 2026 plan sets indicates that the hydrologically consequential components of the basin remain substantially unchanged. The basin continues to include a deeply excavated bottom and perforated underdrain immediately adjacent to a headwater wetland, while collected water is discharged approximately 275 feet or more downgradient from the head of that wetland.

REMA conservatively estimates that approximately 21,700 square feet, or approximately one-half acre, of the wetland lies within the area most directly susceptible to reduced groundwater contribution and altered hydroperiod.

No site-specific water-budget analysis, groundwater monitoring, piezometric investigation, or comparable hydrogeologic evaluation has been provided demonstrating that the existing quantity, timing, duration, and spatial distribution of water supporting this portion of the wetland will be maintained.



The fact that intercepted water may ultimately be discharged farther downstream within the same wetland system does not, by itself, demonstrate preservation of the hydrology of the intervening headwater wetland area.

REMA therefore considers the potential hydrologic impact associated with Basin 210 to remain unresolved.

9.2 Vernal Pool and Amphibian Habitat

The applicant's subsequent identification and mapping of six potential vernal pools represents a meaningful improvement to the record. However, the mapped features were identified principally through desktop analysis and have not been evaluated through a documented spring breeding-season vernal pool survey.

More importantly, the specific concern raised in REMA's February review regarding potential embedded or marginal breeding habitat within the southeastern pond-marsh complex has not been directly resolved.

The available information does not establish whether shallow vegetated portions of this system support breeding or successful reproduction by wood frog, spotted salamander, or other obligate pool-breeding amphibians. Nor has information been provided regarding fish presence, seasonal fish access to shallow marginal habitats, egg-mass occurrence, larval development, or breeding-season hydroperiod.

Tighe & Bond's most recent review similarly identifies remaining biological uncertainty concerning potential Vernal Pool E and indicates that final determination of its biological function may require a breeding-season survey.

REMA therefore considers the vernal pool issue to have been partially addressed through mapping and terrestrial-habitat analysis, but not resolved biologically.



9.3 Southeastern Pond–Wetland Receiving System and Water Quality

The southeastern pond and associated wetland system remain receiving areas for multiple proposed stormwater discharges.

REMA has not identified baseline water-quality characterization of this system for nutrients, suspended solids or turbidity, temperature, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, pH, or comparable parameters necessary to characterize existing conditions.

This deficiency becomes more important when considered together with the unresolved biological characterization of the pond–marsh system. At present, neither the existing physicochemical condition nor the complete biological sensitivity of the receiving resource has been established.

Post-development monitoring could provide useful information regarding future project performance, but it would not substitute for characterization of the resource prior to disturbance.

REMA also notes that the most recent Drainage Report identified in Tighe & Bond's August 28, 2026 review is dated March 9, 2026, while the current development plans have subsequently been revised through August 18, 2026. The applicant should clarify whether the existing drainage, routing, storage, recharge, and water-quality calculations remain fully applicable to the current plan configuration and provide supporting documentation where necessary.

9.4 Wetland Delineation and Impact Accounting

The applicant has represented that portions of the original 2008 wetland delineation were field-verified during 2025. However, the current August plans continue to identify May 2008 as the date of wetland delineation, while portions of the depicted wetland boundary and corresponding impact calculations have changed during the application process.



Most notably, the reported wetland impact associated with the proposed roadway crossing increased from approximately 3,475 square feet on the March 2026 plans to approximately 4,455 square feet on the May 2026 plans.

REMA has not identified a clear reconciliation demonstrating whether this change resulted from revised wetland boundary locations, project design modifications, revised impact-accounting methodology, or some combination thereof.

The applicant should provide a concise reconciliation of the current wetland delineation and corresponding direct wetland and Upland Review Area impact calculations so that the Commission can determine which figures accurately represent the current proposal.

9.5 Information Recommended Prior to Final Determination

Based upon the foregoing review, REMA recommends that the Commission consider obtaining the following information before reaching a final determination regarding potential wetland and watercourse impacts:

- A site-specific hydrologic or hydrogeologic evaluation of Basin 210 sufficient to determine whether excavation and the proposed underdrain will intercept shallow groundwater presently supporting the adjacent headwater wetland, and whether the existing hydroperiod of the intervening wetland area will be maintained.
- A breeding-season biological evaluation sufficient to resolve the remaining uncertainty concerning potential vernal pool function, including the southeastern pond-marsh complex and any other potential habitat that the Commission considers material to its review.
- Clarification of whether the current stormwater and drainage analyses fully correspond to the August 18, 2026 development plans.
- Reconciliation of the current wetland delineation, the 2025 field-verification effort, and the direct wetland and Upland Review Area impact calculations shown on successive plan sets.



- Consideration of whether baseline characterization of the southeastern pond–wetland receiving system is necessary to evaluate potential water-quality effects before development occurs.

REMA recognizes that the extent to which each of these items is required for application completeness or permit approval is ultimately a determination for the Commission pursuant to its regulations and with advice from legal counsel.

9.6 Final Conclusion

The revised Saddle Ridge submission contains a number of substantive improvements and provides considerably more information than was available when REMA completed its February 16, 2026 review.

For that reason, REMA’s present conclusion is more focused than the conclusion reached in our original report.

Several earlier concerns have been addressed, narrowed, or reduced in significance. However, the additional submissions do not resolve the principal hydrologic concern associated with Basin 210, do not biologically establish the presence or absence of vernal pool function within the southeastern pond–marsh complex, and do not provide baseline characterization of that headwater receiving system.

These are not simply questions concerning preferred design or additional environmental enhancement. They involve the existing hydrology and biological function of regulated wetland resources and the information necessary to evaluate whether those resources will be physically altered by the proposed development.

As discussed in Section 8.0, Connecticut case law recognizes an important distinction between information needed by an inland wetlands agency to make an informed impact determination and conditions intended to monitor, implement, or safeguard a project after that determination has been made. REMA respectfully defers the legal application of those principles to the Commission and its counsel.



From an environmental and ecological standpoint, REMA concludes that additional site-specific information regarding Basin 210 hydrology and breeding-season amphibian habitat is directly relevant to evaluating the potential for physical alteration of the property's wetlands and watercourses. Resolution of these remaining questions would provide the Commission with a more complete and scientifically supportable record upon which to base its final determination.

REMA respectfully submits these supplemental comments for consideration by the Conservation Commission/Inland Wetlands Agency and Planning and Zoning Commission and remains available to respond to questions regarding the technical findings presented herein.

Please feel free to contact our office with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

REMA ECOLOGICAL SERVICES, LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "George T. Logan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

George T. Logan, MS, PWS, CSE

Registered Soil Scientist

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