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August 16, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME : Broad Meadows Marsh Restoration Project
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Quincy
PROJECT WATERSHED : Boston Harbor
EOEA NUMBER : 13405
PROJECT PROPONENT : **City of Quincy** and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : July 10, 2006

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) **adequately and properly complies** with MEPA. The proponent has requested that the DEIR be reviewed as a Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR). Since there are no substantive issues that remain to be addressed, I am allowing the DEIR to be reviewed as a Final EIR in accordance with 301 CMR 11.08(8)(b)(2). The availability of the Final EIR will be noticed in the August 23, 2006 issue of the *Environmental Monitor* and subject to a 30-day public comment period, after which I will issue a Certificate on the Final EIR. While I am allowing the DEIR to be reviewed as a Final EIR, I note that there are some outstanding issues that will need to be addressed during the permitting and review process as outlined below and in the comment letters from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM).

The project is undergoing MEPA review and requires the preparation of a mandatory EIR pursuant to Section 11.03 (1) (a) because the project involves alteration of more than 50 acres of land; Sections 11.03 (3)(a)(1a) because it involves alteration of one or more acres of salt marsh or bordering vegetated wetlands; and Sections 11.03 (3)(a)(1b) because it will involve alteration of ten or more acres of other wetlands. The project was also under review pursuant to Section 11.03(3)(a)(2) because it would potentially require a Variance in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Since the filing of the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), a site-

specific wetlands delineation has been conducted and the project redesigned. As a result, the project will not result in a net loss of wetlands and will not require a Variance under the WPA.

The project will require a Chapter 91 License and a 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and an Order of Conditions from the Quincy Conservation Commission (and, on appeal only, a Superseding Order from DEP). The project is subject to a federal consistency review by the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM). The project will require a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for construction activities from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The proposed project is not seeking financial assistance from the Commonwealth. MEPA jurisdiction therefore extends to all aspects of the project within the subject matter of required permits. In the case of this project, MEPA jurisdiction extends to land, wetlands, water quality, waterways and tidelands.

The proposed project is located on a 108-acre site designated as open space and protected under Article 97 of the State Constitution. The project is a joint effort between the City of Quincy and the USACOE and is being designed to remove historic dredge material and restore an historic salt marsh ecosystem. The Broad Meadow Salt Marsh was adversely affected by previous dredging of the Town River federal navigation channel. The project, as proposed in the DEIR, will remove 65 acres of fill and restore or create 35 acres of salt marsh, five acres of freshwater wet meadow, and 24 acres of coastal upland grassland habitat. Portions of an existing berm will be removed during construction of a new salt marsh channel, and other portions of the berm will be increased in elevation to 12.5 NAVD (North American Vertical Datum). A new pedestrian walkway will be constructed along the top of the berm and connected to trails and elevated walkways across the salt marsh. The project also involves relocating a portion of an existing overhead electric distribution line from the dredged material disposal area to the western boundary of the site.

The DEIR includes an evaluation of several alternatives including project designs that would result in different ratios of low to high marsh, and alternatives involving off-site versus on-site placement of excavated fill. The Scope for the DEIR required the proponent to evaluate alternative project designs that use a larger percentage of the site acreage for creation of low salt marsh (because low salt marshes are considered to have a greater ecological value than high salt marsh) and to consider alternative upland area designs that replicate, to the extent practicable, native coastal landforms. The project as proposed in the DEIR will result in approximately 17 acres of low marsh and 34 acres of high marsh (compared to 8 acres of low marsh and 30 acres of high marsh as proposed in the ENF). Dredged material will be relocated to the northern portion of the site, which will be designed to support coastal grassland and wet meadow habitat.

In addition to its ecological benefits, the project, which is one of the largest and most ambitious coastal restoration efforts within the Boston Harbor Watershed, will also provide important recreational and educational opportunities for Quincy residents and visitors. The project has evolved considerably since the filing of the ENF and the proponent has incorporated measures to improve project design as recommended in the Scope and in comment letters

received. I commend the City and the USACOE for advancing this environmental restoration project. However, as outlined below and in the comments received, state agencies have raised some concerns to be addressed during permitting.

The proponent should provide additional information to DEP during the permitting process to clarify the total amount of bordering vegetated wetlands (BVW) fill associated with the creation of the coastal grassland area, and to demonstrate that fill has been minimized to the fullest extent possible. The project is being proposed under the Limited Project provisions in the Wetlands regulations (310 CMR 10.53(4)). The proponent should provide additional information during permitting to demonstrate how the project will improve existing wetlands functions pursuant to 310 CMR 10.53(4), as further detailed in DEP's comment letter. Additional information that DEP will require during permitting includes plans and schematics that show typical examples of terraces and diversions proposed to divert water from work areas, and procedures for installing and removing culverts and swamp mats from marsh areas.

The DEIR included information on construction sequencing, stockpiling of soil, and proposed measures to protect water quality. The proponent should provide additional information to DEP during the permit process regarding feasible alternative staging areas, the effectiveness of low ground-pressure equipment and protective mats, potential project delays, and proposed measures to avoid and minimize construction-related impacts, as further detailed in DEP's comment letter. The proponent should ensure that construction activities are designed and scheduled to protect fisheries resources near the project site, as recommended by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) in its comment letter on the ENF.

CZM has expressed reservations about the feasibility of stockpiling the dredged material to the elevations specified in the DEIR. As noted in its comment letter, similar material was dredged at the nearby Neponset River Salt Marsh Restoration Project and stacking and shaping of the material was done with great difficulty. The proponent should consider employing other methods for proper stacking and shaping, if necessary.

The DEIR proposes a five-year post-construction monitoring plan. All monitoring for salt marsh establishment and function should be performed in collaboration with CZM's Wetland Restoration Program and in conformance to established CZM standards for salt marsh monitoring. The proponent should provide information during the permitting process regarding the adequacy of funding for monitoring and maintenance activities as requested by DEP. The proponent should also provide additional information during permitting regarding alternative approaches for the proposed elimination of *Phragmites*, including an alternative that minimizes use of chemical controls.

The DEIR provides only a cursory description of the grass species to be planted within the coastal grassland. As recommended by CZM in its comments, the seed mix for the proposed grassland area should specifically refer to "native warm season grass species" and should include at a minimum Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), Creeping Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Silky Wild Rye (*Elymus villosus*), and Virginia Wild-Rye (*Elymus*

virginicus). Cool season turf grasses such as Kentucky blue-grass should be avoided. The proponent should provide more detailed information to state agencies during the permitting process regarding the proposed seed mix, method of seeding, and provisions for erosion control during the two-three year period it can take to get grassland species established.

The DEIR included draft Section 61 findings for the DEP Water Quality Certification and Chapter 91 License. The proponent has committed to mitigation measures and best management practices (BMPs) including:

- Sedimentation and Erosion Controls, spill control measures, and other construction-phase BMPs to protect water quality and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) resources;
- Post-construction monitoring plan including monitoring of wetlands soils, site hydrology, benthic community, BVW, grasslands, and wildlife;
- Maintenance measures to ensure successful establishment of salt marsh and freshwater wetlands;
- Creation of tidal channels to mimic natural channels that existed prior to historic disposal of dredged material;
- Boardwalks and other design elements to enhance public access to the Broad Meadow Marsh and coastal environment;
- Protection of Broad Meadow Marsh as public open space in perpetuity (protected under Article 97 for conservation, open space and recreation).

Based on my review of the DEIR and comments received, and consultation with state agencies, I am satisfied that any outstanding issues can be adequately addressed during the state permitting and review process. Therefore, I will allow the DEIR to be reviewed as a Final EIR in accordance with 301 CMR 11.08(8)(b)(2). The proponent should consult with DEP and CZM regarding additional information required to demonstrate consistency with applicable regulations and CZM's enforceable program policies. The availability of the Final EIR will be noticed in the next issue of the Environmental Monitor.

August 16, 2006

DATE



Robert W. Golledge, Jr., Secretary

Comments Received

- 8/10/06 Department of Environmental Protection, Northeast Regional Office
- 8/14/06 EOEA, Office of Coastal Zone Management
- 8/15/06 Department of Environmental Protection, Wetlands Program

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