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MEPA

January 8, 2007

Secretary Robert W. Golledge, Jr.
Attn: MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston MA 02114

Subject: Draft Vegetation Management Plan, Westover Air Reserve Base

Dear Reviewer:

On behalf of Westover Air Reserve Base (ARB), Woodlot Alternatives, Inc has delivered to you one copy of the revised Draft Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) dated September 2006. The VMP provides neighboring landowners, conservation commissions, other regulatory agencies, and the public with a description of the Base, its surrounding environment, and various vegetation management practices designed to comply with the regulations listed above. These recommendations have been based on site analyses of vegetation resources conducted on Westover ARB and literature reviews.

The VMP is a guide for managing the vegetation of upland and wetland communities present on and near Westover ARB, while ensuring that the Base's mission is accomplished successfully. Westover ARB is required to maintain navigable airspace free from obstructions to enhance public safety and comply fully with U.S. Air Force and Federal Aviation Administration rules and regulations.

This VMP has been developed for Westover ARB in accordance with 310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations 10.00 *Wetlands Protection Regulations*, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7064, *Integrated Natural Resources Management*, Unified Facilities Criteria 3-260-01, *Airfield and Heliport Planning and Design*, Air Force Pamphlet 91-212, *Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) Management Techniques*, and Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 77 (14 CFR 77), *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, AFI 31-101, *Air Force Installation Security Program*.

Obstructions, including tall vegetation, have been or are in the process of being removed from three of the four Clear Zones and other safety areas on Westover ARB. The Air Force is having this VMP revised as part of the process to obtain permits to continue removing tree obstructions in wetlands. Figures 4-5 through 4-9 represent the approximate locations of remaining tree obstructions by using black contour lines at 10 foot intervals. These contours do not show all of the obstructions because the trees have grown since the original maps were drawn. The contours also underestimate the trees to be removed because they show trees that penetrate the protected airspace while the Air Force requirement is to remove obstructions within 10 feet of that airspace.

The Air Force manages natural resources on an ecosystem basis to the extent that is practical. Thus, the objectives of this VMP are to 1) present and evaluate options to manage vegetation on the airfield and off

ARB transitional surfaces for Westover ARB to comply with mission requirements and U.S. Air Force/Federal Aviation Administration standards and 2) reduce the BASH threat and protect migratory/state-listed rare species consistent with military operational readiness. The transition of wooded areas to grassland communities and acceptable containment of noxious weeds contribute to these objectives and can be programmed over a 5-year period.

Westover ARB is providing you this opportunity to review the Draft VMP prior to their releasing it to the general public and then holding a public meeting. The meeting will be scheduled at a later date. These steps are part of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (WPA; 310 CMR 10.00) permit process. You are welcome to submit written comments on the Draft VMP and to ask questions at the meeting.

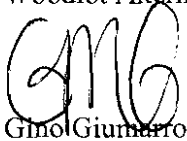
The document has line numbers next to the text and each page or figure is numbered. Please provide this information with each comment or question. Please also provide the name and contact information of the reviewer to allow us to properly keep track of comments and in case we need to clarify a question or comment.

You may provide written comments or questions to Westover ARB at your earliest convenience, but no later than 30 days. Address all inquires and comments to either 439Patriot.Editor@westover.af.mil or:

439th Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office
Westover Air Reserve Base
100 Lloyd Street, Suite 103
Chicopee, MA 01022

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this process.

Regards,
Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.



Gino Giunardo
Director of Ecological Services

Enclosed:
Westover ARB Draft Vegetation Management Plan

cc: A. Milroy – Westover ARB