

PUBLIC NOTICE

Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian A. Bowles will hold a public hearing on Thursday, December 11, 2008 for a proposal to designate the **Upper Housatonic River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)** located within the municipalities of Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Washington. The Secretary accepted the ACEC nomination for full public review on September 29, 2008 after it was submitted on September 2, 2008 by 43 citizens, including state Senator Ben Downing; state Representatives Dennis Guyer, Smitty Pignatelli, and Christopher N. Speranzo pursuant to 301 CMR 12.05. The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires, and Massachusetts Audubon Society comprise the nominating steering committee.

The Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs will hold the public hearing on:

Thursday, December 11, 2008 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Lenox Town Hall Auditorium, 6 Walker Street, Lenox

The purpose of this hearing is to receive public testimony to determine whether to designate the proposed Upper Housatonic River ACEC pursuant to Section 2(7) of Chapter 21A of the Massachusetts General Laws. Written and/or oral testimony will be accepted at the hearing regarding the resources of the nominated area, the proposed boundary, and the appropriateness of such a designation. Additional written comments may be submitted to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs within ten days of the public hearing, by December 22, 2008, to:

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Attn: Elizabeth Sorenson, ACEC Program
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 700
Boston, MA 02114

or via email to Secretary Bowles c/o the ACEC Program at the email address: elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us

Covering approximately 12,280 acres in Lee (1,610 acres, 13% of the nominated area), Lenox (3,545 acres, 29%), Pittsfield (3,155 acres, 25%), and Washington (3,970 acres, 32%), the nominated area includes the 13-mile corridor of the Upper Housatonic River, adjacent floodplains, tributary streams, and the steep slopes of October Mountain. The nomination describes all 9 of the inland resource categories listed in the ACEC Regulations: fishery habitat; inland wetlands; inland surface waters; water supply areas; natural hazard areas; agricultural areas; historical/archaeological; habitat resources; and special use areas, and further cites the presence of all 9 factors listed under 301 CMR 12.09 as reasons for ACEC designation: threat to public health through inappropriate use; quality of the natural characteristics; productivity; uniqueness of the area; irreversibility of impact; imminence of threat to the resource; magnitude of impact; economic benefits; and supporting factors. Four public meetings were held in October, one in each of the four communities in the nominated area.

Copies of the nomination and maps showing the proposed boundary have been distributed to local officials in the four communities, and are available to view at city and town halls, public libraries, and offices of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in Pittsfield, Mass Audubon's Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Lenox, Berkshire Natural Resources Council in Pittsfield, and Green Berkshires in Great Barrington. A review copy is also available at the offices of the DCR Bureau of Planning and Resource Protection, 251 Causeway Street, 7th Floor, Boston. The nomination and a map of the proposed ACEC boundary are posted at the nominator's website, <http://savethehousatonic.org>.

Further information regarding the ACEC Program is available at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acccl> or by contacting Elizabeth Sorenson, ACEC Program, at (617) 626-1394, or at the above DCR address or email.