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January 20, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME: Thompson Island Salt Marsh Restoration Project
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Boston
PROJECT WATERSHED: Boston Harbor
EOEA NUMBER: 13696
PROJECT PROPONENT: Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR: December 21, 2005

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 this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The project proposes the restoration of a salt marsh/pond on Thompson Island. The project involves removing a debris pile that prevents tidal flushing of the salt pond/marsh located on the southwest side of the island. Lack of daily tidal exchange has resulted in a stagnant waterbody with severe algae blooms and encroachment by the non-native invasive common reed, *Phragmites australis*.

The project is subject to environmental review pursuant to Section 11.03 (3)(b)(1)(a), 11.03 (2)(b)(1) and 11.03 (10)(b)(2) of the MEPA regulations since it involves alteration of a coastal bank; because the project site is entirely located within priority habitat of rare species, as indicated in the 11th Edition of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas; and because the project may result in impacts to an archaeological site. Thompson Island, in its entirety, is listed in the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The project requires a Programmatic General

Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; review from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP); review from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC); and an Order of Conditions from the Boston Conservation Commission. The Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) will review the project and issue a Consistency Finding to ensure that measures will be employed to protect coastal resources. The project area is protected under the terms of a Conservation Restriction, and the project requires approval from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the National Park Service (NPS).

The Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (the proponent) received funding from CZM for an initial feasibility study for the project through the Wetlands Restoration Program, but the actual project will be financed by the proponent. Therefore, MEPA jurisdiction is limited to the subject matter of required or potentially required state actions, and extends to wetlands, rare species and historic resources.

The proponent has worked with CZM, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries to develop a recommended alternative for the project. The project proposes to reestablish the tidal connection between the pond and the ocean along the southeastern shore of the pond where an existing debris pile has eroded and there is evidence of a historic stream channel. The debris includes man-made objects such as rebar, old pipes, bricks and concrete. The project involves removing the obstructions between the pond and the ocean while minimizing disturbance to existing resources. The area of ground disturbance from removal of the debris will be limited to approximately 395 square feet of degraded coastal bank.

The project also proposes to create a more defined channel that would be approximately 22 feet long and approximately 4 to 6 feet wide. The elevation of the channel thread will be lowered to elevation 4 feet NGVD and will be approximately three feet wide. Approximately 0.7 vertical feet of material would be removed and disposed of in an approved offsite location on the island. The center of the swale would remain native sand and gravel materials and would be allowed to erode naturally with the tides and find its preferred location and grade. The project will result in a permanent hydrological regime change to the salt pond. 5,009 square feet of salt pond will become intertidal zone through increased tidal flushing. The project will require review by the Boston Conservation Commission under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (310 CMR 10.00).

The project is expected to have positive environmental effects. By reopening the hydraulic connection to the ocean, diurnal tidal flushing will replenish the water in the pond twice daily, during normal high tides, and expose a fringe of mudflat habitat during low tides, while maintaining and creating valuable aquatic habitat. The project will increase the viability of the salt marsh and reduce the spread of invasive Phragmites.

The project site is located entirely within Priority Habitat 720 (PH 720) as indicated in the 11th edition of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas. NHESP has stated that the following species have been found in the vicinity of the site: Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*, Special Concern) and Sea beach dock (*Rumex pallidus*, Threatened). These species are protected under the

Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (M.G.L. c. 131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). NHESP has reviewed the project and determined that it will have no adverse impact on protected species, and may likely provide a net benefit for species that are not currently known at the site.

Thompson Island is listed in the National and State Registers of Historic Places in its entirety as a contributing element of the Boston Harbor Islands Archaeological District, for its Native American archaeological sites and land use. The proponent has submitted a description of the proposed project to MHC. MHC has requested that an intensive (location) archaeological survey be conducted of the direct project impact area and any staging areas needed for equipment or storage/stockpiling of materials. The survey will be used to help identify project planning alternatives to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects to significant cultural resources through planning and design considerations. In addition, the survey should evaluate the potential impacts of the new inter-tidal zone water level fluctuations to expose previously buried archaeological resources. The proponent should continue to consult with MHC with regard to the survey and measures that can be taken to avoid or minimize impacts to archaeological resources. The proponent should also note comments from the MA Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources.

The ENF contains sufficient information to understand the impacts of the project, and to demonstrate that the impacts of the project do not warrant the preparation of an EIR. The project is supported by both state and federal resource management agencies. The proponent can resolve any remaining issues during the state permitting process. No further MEPA review is required.

January 20, 2006

Date


Stephen R. Pritchard, Secretary

Comments Received:

12/27/2005 MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
12/28/2005 Northern Ecological Associates, for the Proponent
1/3/2006 Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources
1/9/2006 Arthur N. Pearson, President, Thompson Island Outward Bound

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