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February 6, 2009

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

PROJECT NAME : Agawam to West Springfield Circuit Separation Project
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Agawam and West Springfield
PROJECT WATERSHED : Westfield and Connecticut
EEA NUMBER : 14355
PROJECT PROPONENT : Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO)
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : January 7, 2009

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62I) 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).

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), the project consists of improvements to the Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO) electric transmission system within the municipalities of Agawam and West Springfield to provide safe, reliable, and economic transmission service to the Springfield area. This project is also proposed to ensure that transmission system components comply with reliability standards developed by Northeast Utilities (NU). WMECO is proposing the reconstruction of the existing double-circuit 115-kV overhead transmission lines between the Agawam and West Springfield substations (the 1311 and 1412 lines). The project involves removing the existing 1311 and 1412 lines and the associated lattice towers. New 1311 and 1412 lines will then be reconstructed, using higher-capacity conductors on separate steel monopole structures. Monopole heights will average 100 feet, although they will range from 90 feet to 105 feet depending upon localized topography.

Approximately 850 feet of the 1311 line will be placed underground as it enters the Agawam substation to avoid conflicts with other transmission lines. Except for the relocation of a portion of the Right of Way (ROW) traversing Bondi's Island landfill (EEA No. 3384), the new lines, replacement facilities, and structures will be confined to the existing WMECO ROW. The entire ROW is approximately 2.8-miles in length. The relocated segment of the ROW is approximately 3,700 feet in length and is being proposed at the request of the City of Springfield.

Estimated project wetland impacts include: 12,393 square feet (sf) of temporary impact to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW) and 20,836 sf of permanent impact to BVW; 130,858 sf of temporary impact to Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF) and 73,590 sf of permanent impact to BLSF; and 32,613 sf of temporary impact to Riverfront Area and 75,758 sf of permanent impact to Riverfront Area. The project will include three overhead crossings of the Westfield River, located within the same area of existing ROW crossings.

Jurisdiction

The project is undergoing MEPA review pursuant to Sections 11.03(3)(b)(1)(d) and 11.03(3)(b)(1)(f) of the MEPA regulations because it requires a State agency action and will result in the alteration of 5,000 or more square feet (sf) of BVW and the alteration of ½ or more acres of other wetlands. The project will require a Section 401 Water Quality Certificate (401 WQC) and a Chapter 91 (c.91) Waterways License from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and a Section 404 Permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The project must obtain an Approval to Construct Electric Transmission Line from the Department of Utilities (DPU) pursuant to M.G.L. c.164, §72, as well as exemptions from portions of the local zoning code. Finally, the project will require an Order of Conditions from both the Agawam and the West Springfield Conservation Commissions.

Because the Proponent is not seeking financial assistance from the Commonwealth for the project, MEPA jurisdiction extends to those aspects of the project that are within the subject matter of required or potentially required state permits and which may cause Damage to the Environment as defined in the MEPA regulations. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction exists over wetlands and waterways and energy.

Wetlands and Waterways

As noted previously, the project will result in the temporary and permanent impact wetland resource areas within the ROW. To avoid and minimize impacts to wetland resource areas, the project will remain within the existing 100-foot to 150-foot wide ROW (with the exception of the relocation within the Bondi's Island landfill). No expansion of the existing substations is proposed, with only minor modifications at each substation required to facilitate termination of each new circuit.

No work is proposed within the Westfield River itself. New consolidated c.91 Licenses will be sought to permit the three crossings in their newly proposed configurations. This c.91 License will replace the three separate existing licenses for the existing crossings. Wetland impacts will occur primarily in association with the use of temporary crane pads and access routes to facilitate removal of the existing lattice structures and the placement of the new monopole structures. The ENF included a discussion of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for construction and maintenance procedures associated with the transmission lines. Temporarily disturbed areas will be restored in situ and compensatory mitigation for permanent impacts will be determined in consultation with MassDEP and USACE. The Proponent will establish a program to maintain existing clearances beneath the transmission lines.

MassDEP has indicated that while some of the proposed work may be exempt from the Wetlands Protection Act (the Act) (M.G.L. c.131 §40). Should the proposed expansion work for this project may be deemed new, or a substantial change or enlargement, it will require submittal of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and must comply with the Act and regulations. Furthermore, the Proponent has indicated that the work may be submitted for review by MassDEP under the Limited Project provision of the Act. MassDEP has noted that proposed work must, where possible, meet General Performance Standards and where the work cannot meet General Performance Standards it may be approved as a Limited Project. The Proponent should follow the additional guidance included MassDEP comment letter for content and plan requirements associated with the anticipated NOI and Section 401 WQC application.

Rare Species

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) has indicated that the project is located within mapped habitat for the following State-listed species associated with the Westfield River and surrounding habitats: Arrow Clubtail (*Stylurus spiniceps*), Triangle Floater (*Alasmidonta undulata*), and Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). These species and their habitats are protected pursuant to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) (M.G.L. c.131A) and its implementing regulations (321 CMR 10.00). As noted in the ENF and the NHESP comment letter, the Proponent has consulted with NHESP regarding potential rare species impacts prior to filing the ENF. The comment letter from NHESP notes that they do not anticipate that the project will require a MESA Conservation and Management Permit (321 CMR 10.23). However, in lieu of MESA permitting review, the NHESP has outlined a series of conditions that must be adhered to during the construction process to avoid harm to State-listed species. These conditions, outlined in greater detail in the comment letter, include items such as field surveys, time-of-year (TOY) restrictions, and site stabilization and restoration BMPs. Finally, the Proponent should consult directly with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife – Fisheries Program to ensure that impacts associated with project work do not impair fish habitat.

Energy

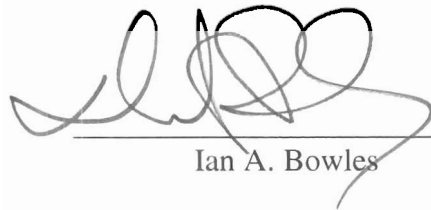
The project is proposed in response to reliability requirements imposed by NU. Reliability criteria are designed to protect against loss of electrical supply under certain

contingency scenarios (principally electric system outages). The ENF presented three alternatives (in addition to the Preferred Alternative) that were developed and considered as ways to alleviate the existing reliability issues on the 1311 and 1412 lines. Each of these alternatives presented additional challenges, including widening the existing ROW to accommodate infrastructure, higher project costs, additional waterways crossings, or increased impact to roads due to placement of transmission wires underground within roadways. Therefore, these three alternatives were dismissed as viable options to achieve project goals.

At the MEPA consultation session, the Proponent described the engineering challenges imposed by rerouting the existing ROW within the Bondi's Island landfill site. The Proponent is reminded that should the Preferred Alternative be modified, the Proponent should consult the MEPA Regulations at 301 CMR 11.10(6) to determine if a Notice of Project Change should be filed. Additionally, should the Preferred Alternative be implemented, relocation of the ROW from the center of the Bondi's Island landfill site does not permit the usage of the landfill in any manner other than in accordance with its existing permits. Based on the information in the ENF and after consultation with relevant public agencies, I find that no further MEPA review is required at this time.

February 6, 2009

Date



Ian A. Bowles

Comments received:

01/27/2009 Massachusetts Historical Commission
01/27/2009 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
01/27/2009 Division of Fisheries and Wildlife – Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
01/27/2009 Department of Environmental Protection - WERO

IAB/HSJ/hsj