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April 24, 2009

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

PROJECT NAME : Worcester Blackstone Visitor Center  
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Worcester  
PROJECT WATERSHED : Blackstone  
EEA NUMBER : 14395  
PROJECT PROPONENT : City of Worcester  
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : March 25, 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).

Project Description

The project as described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) consists of rehabilitation of the Washburn-Moen Building and development of a visitor center. The project site is within a National Register of Historic Places district (Blackstone Canal Historic District). The proposed visitor center will be linked to bike paths, boardwalks, and Blackstone River canoe access. The primary tenants of the building will be the Worcester Historical Museum and the Central Massachusetts Convention and Visitor Bureau.

Development of the proposed visitor center includes construction of additional parking, landscaping, a stormwater management system, and an active recreation area. As noted in the ENF, the designation of a portion of the site as protected under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth will remain in place.

### Permits and Jurisdiction

The proposed project is undergoing environmental review pursuant to Section 11.03(1)(b)(3) of the MEPA regulations because it requires a state agency action and because it may involve conversion of land held for natural purposes in accordance with Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth.

The project will receive funding from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) and requires approval from the legislature for a disposition of Article 97 land, which will be transferred from MassHighway to the City of Worcester and then leased to the Worcester Historical Museum. The project requires a conveyance by the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) for the transfer of land from MassHighway to the City of Worcester. The land proposed for transfer includes six parcels, totaling 6.32 acres, including the parcel protected under Article 97. Based on review of the ENF and comments received, it appears that the proposed project is consistent with the recreational uses envisioned for that portion of the site protected under Article 97.

The project requires an Order of Conditions from the Worcester Conservation Commission (and, on appeal only, a Superseding Order from MassDEP). The project may require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has concurred with the MassHighway finding for the project of No Adverse Effect on historic and archaeological resources.

The project will receive funding from an agency of the Commonwealth. MassHighway is providing \$2.2 million in state funds and transferring over 6.3 acres of land to the project. Therefore, MEPA jurisdiction is broad and applies to all aspects of the project that may cause Damage to the Environment as defined in the MEPA regulations.

### ENF Review

According to the ENF, the project will result in alteration of approximately 2.7 acres of the 7.3-acre site. A 610 square foot (sf) addition to the existing building is proposed, as well as 66 new parking spaces (for a total of 76 spaces). Water use is projected in the ENF at 2,600 gallons of water per day (gpd) and wastewater generation at 5,490 gpd. The project will impact 7,935 sf of Riverfront Area.

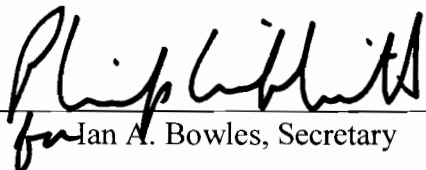
As noted above, a portion of the site, approximately 3.17 acres, is protected for open space or recreational purposes under Article 97. According to the ENF, this land was placed under Article 97 protection as replacement land as part of the mitigation plan for the Route 146/Mass Turnpike Interchange project (EEA# 6180). This 3.17-acre area will be developed into a parking area and active recreation space, which will be open to the public and remain protected under Article 97. A portion of the Blackstone River Bikeway will be constructed through the project site.

The ENF indicates that stormwater will be managed in accordance with MassDEP's stormwater management standards, and will include a bioretention system. The City should ensure that the project is designed to comply with MassDEP's Stormwater Management standards, which were incorporated into the Wetlands Protection Act and Water Quality regulations in February, 2008. The project includes work adjacent to the Blackstone River. The City should incorporate additional measures as appropriate to avoid any further impairment of the river during construction activities. As noted in the MassDEP comment letter, the Blackstone River is listed in the Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters as a Category 5 Waters for metals, nutrients, turbidity, and other impairments.

The project involves activities with a 100-year floodplain. I refer the proponent to the comment letter from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Flood Hazard Management Program for guidance on applicable regulations and other requirements pertaining to development within the 100-year floodplain.

The ENF has sufficiently defined the nature and general elements of the project, and has proposed measures to avoid and minimize environmental impacts. I am satisfied that any outstanding issues can be addressed through the state funding and land transfer/lease approval process. Based on review of the ENF and comments received, and in consultation with state agencies, I have determined that no further MEPA review is required. The project may proceed to state permitting.

April 24, 2009  
DATE

  
for Jan A. Bowles, Secretary

Comments Received:

- 4/13/09 Department of Conservation and Recreation
- 4/14/09 Department of Environmental Protection, Central Regional Office
- 4/14/09 MassHighway letter to MHC (dated February 25, 2009) Section 106 Review-No Adverse Effect (with MHC concurrence April 10, 2009)

IAB/AE/ae