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August 15, 2008

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ON THE  
NOTICE OF PROJECT CHANGE

PROJECT NAME: George D. Harlow Field 20-Year Airport Improvement Plan  
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY: Marshfield  
PROJECT WATERSHED: Weymouth & Weir  
EEA NUMBER: 13499  
PROJECT PROPONENT: Marshfield Airport Commission  
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR: July 9, 2008

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M. G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.10 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I have reviewed the Notice of Project Change (NPC) submitted on this project and hereby determine that it **continues to require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The project change involves the consolidation of two 60-foot by 60-foot aircraft hangars into one 106-foot by 85-foot hangar. The NPC also includes a request for a Phase 1 Waiver to construct the proposed new aircraft hangar in advance of filing the outstanding Final EIR (FEIR) for the project.

In a separate Draft Record of Decision also issued today, I have proposed to grant a Phase 1 Waiver allowing the commencement of the hangar project to proceed prior to the completion of the FEIR for the entire project, which encompasses a series of larger airport improvement projects as outlined below. This Certificate outlines the issues pertaining to the project presented in the NPC. The Scope for the FEIR has not changed since the March 28, 2008 Certificate on the Draft EIR (DEIR).

### Project Description

The project consists of a 20-year program of projected improvements to the George D. Harlow Field Airport (the "Airport"), to be performed as program funding permits. The project site is a municipally-owned general aviation airport on an approximately 170-acre parcel in Marshfield that mainly serves corporate, business and recreational flyers. The Airport has one paved runway, 3,001 feet in length and 75 feet in width, with a full-length parallel taxiway. The Airport is under the care and custody of the Marshfield Airport Commission pursuant to Chapter 90 of the General Laws.

The Airport is surrounded by extensive wetland systems that border both Bass Creek and Green Harbor River. Bass Creek flows along the northern end of the airfield and Green Harbor River flows along the southern end of the airfield. Both rivers come to a confluence 1,800 feet southeast of the airfield before flowing toward Green Harbor. Between the confluence of these two river systems are large wetland systems that extend, in some areas, to the edge of the runway. The Airport and surrounding lands are within the Coastal Zone of the Commonwealth.

The project site and abutting areas are located within Priority and Estimated Habitat for the Eastern Box Turtle, as indicated in the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas. The Airport abuts the Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary, a 530-acre site under the control of Mass Audubon that has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA). In addition, Mass Audubon recently acquired additional abutting land to the west of the airport. Portions of the Mass Audubon land will be directly impacted by the airport's Vegetation Management Program.

In 2000, the Airport commissioned an Airport Master Plan Update (AMPU) in response to concerns with the Airport's aging infrastructure. The Airport's sole runway, Runway 6-24 and its parallel taxiway, are in deteriorating condition and have exceeded their design lives of 20 years, having been last reconstructed in 1983 and 1972 respectively. The Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission (MAC) provided funding for the AMPU and the DEIR. The purpose of the AMPU was to identify those facilities in need of improvement, identify conditions that are not in conformance with FAA design and safety standards, and recommend strategies to improve the identified deficiencies.

The proposed improvements outlined in the DEIR include projects directly related to the safe operations of aircraft (referred to as Airside Improvements) and projects not directly related to the safe operation of aircraft (referred to as Landside Improvements). The proposed activities are designed to improve safety and security; achieve standard runway-to-taxiway separation and taxi widths; provide runway lighting systems; extend the runway and the taxiway; and construct new hangar facilities and associated aprons. The project also involves the acquisition of adjacent land and residential properties; vegetation management to clear protected air space; and the installation of stormwater management facilities. The Proponent's Preferred Alternative will result in impacts to 2.26 acres of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands

(BVW) and 1.81 acres of Riverfront Area; 128 acres of tree clearing in wetlands; creation of 5.2 acres of new impervious surface; and the addition of approximately 8,000 cubic yards of fill in a regulatory floodway.

### MEPA History

An Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the project was submitted in April 2005. The Secretary's Certificate on the ENF (May 9, 2005) presented the Scope for the Draft EIR (DEIR). The Proponent submitted the DEIR in February 2008. In a March 28, 2008 Certificate, the Secretary determined that the DEIR adequately and properly complied with MEPA, and laid out the Scope for the FEIR. The Proponent has not yet submitted the FEIR.

### Project Change Description

The NPC has been submitted related to several hangar buildings that were proposed in the ENF and DEIR. The DEIR proposed the construction of the following hangar buildings, which have a total floor area of 38,800 square feet (sf):

- 5-unit T-hangar building: 8,800 sf
- 13-unit T-hangar building: 22,800 sf
- Two conventional hangars (60-feet by 60-feet): 7,200 sf

As outlined in the NPC, the Proponent now proposes to construct one 106-foot by 85-foot conventional hangar instead of two 60-foot by 60-foot hangars. This change increases the total area of hangar space by 1,810 sf, or 4.6 percent of the hangar floor area presented in the DEIR. The subject hangar is proposed to be constructed in the same location as the previously reviewed plan. The hangar will be located on an old paved aircraft parking apron no longer in use, and therefore the project will not result in new impervious surface.

### Jurisdiction

The entire airport improvements project is undergoing review and is subject to the preparation of a mandatory EIR pursuant to the following sections of the MEPA regulations: 301 CMR 11.03(3)(a)(1)(a) because it will result in the alteration of more than an acre of BVW and 301 CMR 11.03(3)(a)(2) because it requires a Variance from the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). The project also meets the following ENF review thresholds: 301 CMR 11.03(2)(b)(2) because it will result in a "take" of rare species protected pursuant to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA, MGL c. 131A); and 301 CMR 11.03(6)(b)(3) because it proposes the expansion of an existing runway at an airport.

The project requires the following permits and/or approvals: Environmental Assessment and a Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); a

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); 401 Water Quality Certification, a Variance from the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and a Superceding Order of Conditions (SOC) from the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP); a Conservation and Management Permit from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP); Federal Consistency Review by the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM); review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC); an Order of Conditions from the Marshfield Conservation Commission; and a Floodplain Special Permit and an Inland Wetland Special Permit from the Town of Marshfield. Because the Proponent is seeking financial assistance from MAC, MEPA jurisdiction is broad and extends to all aspects of the project that have the potential to cause significant Damage to the Environment.

The hangar project (Phase 1) requires approval from the Marshfield Zoning Board of Appeals and the Marshfield Conservation Commission for construction in the 100-year floodplain. The project does not require any state permits, financial assistance, or land transfer.

#### Waiver Request

The Proponent has submitted the Expanded NPC to allow for MEPA and public review of the proposed changes to the project as outlined above. In addition, the NPC contained a request for a Phase 1 Waiver that would allow the construction of the proposed hangar to occur prior to the submittal of the FEIR for the project. In a separate Decision also issued today, I have proposed to grant the Phase 1 Waiver for the hangar project.

While I am proposing to grant the Phase 1 Waiver, which would release the proposed hangar project from further review, I note that outstanding issues related to project alternatives, wetland and flood plain impacts, vegetation management, and rare species still exist for the remainder of the project that must be addressed in the FEIR.

#### Review of the NPC

In its comments on the NPC, NHESP states that it does not have any rare species concerns associated with the proposed hangar project. The Proponent should continue to consult with NHESP regarding rare species impacts and permitting for the entire project. MassDEP's comments reiterate the need for an alternatives analysis in the FEIR to demonstrate that the project is able to meet the requirements of the WPA regulations at 310 CMR 10.05(10), which outline findings that the Commissioner of MassDEP must make before granting a variance. The expanded alternatives analysis presented in the FEIR should also address the issue of whether proposed projects are required to accommodate existing activities or for the expansion of the airport for future use. I refer the Proponent to the Certificate on the DEIR and to comments from the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) on the DEIR and NPC for further guidance on this issue.

Conclusion

Based on a review of the information provided by the Proponent and after consultation with the relevant public agencies, I find that the potential impacts of the proposed hangar as described in the NPC does not warrant further MEPA review.

August 15, 2008

Date



Ian A. Bowles

Comments received:

7/24/2008 Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program  
7/29/2008 Department of Environmental Protection, Southeast Regional Office  
8/5/2008 Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management

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