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September 29, 2008

George Wislocki  
Save The Housatonic  
P.O. Box 501  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Re: Nomination of the Upper Housatonic River, located in portions of the Towns of Lee, Lenox, Washington, and the City of Pittsfield, as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Dear Mr. Wislocki:

I am writing to you, in your capacity as principal contact for the Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination Steering Committee, to acknowledge receipt of the nomination of this area in Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Washington as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) on September 2, 2008.

I am also writing to inform you and the other 42 citizen nominators, and the four communities included in the nominated area, that following an initial review and pursuant to the ACEC Regulations at 301 CMR 12.07, **I am accepting this nomination for full review.** I note that the nominators include U.S. Representative John Olver, State Senator Ben Dowling, State Representatives Dennis Guyer, Smitty Pignatelli, and Christopher Speranzo, and members of the Pittsfield City Council, Lenox Board of Selectmen and Washington Select Board. I find that the nomination meets the minimum regulatory criteria as set forth in the ACEC Regulations.

As you know, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) administers the ACEC Program on behalf of my office. Over the next several months ACEC Program staff will coordinate the overall public review process, solicit environmental information and comment, and conduct a comprehensive analysis of the nomination and merits of designation. The review consists of:

- conducting a **series of public information meetings** in cooperation with the nominating committee, held in the four communities included in the nominated area in order to inform the public about the nomination and the purpose and effects of ACEC designation,
- **gathering and evaluating additional information** about the resources of the nominated area,
- holding a **formal public hearing for the nomination** toward the end of this process, and
- issuing a **decision within 60 days of the public hearing regarding ACEC designation.**

The purpose of the **public information meetings** is to provide information regarding the ACEC nomination and the ACEC Program. The role of the nominating party at these meetings is to describe and explain the nomination, including the resources of the area, the proposed boundary, and the goals or objectives for nominating the area as an ACEC. The role of ACEC Program staff is to describe the ACEC Program and the purpose and effects of ACEC designation. The meetings will be informal, with ample opportunity for questions and answers. Four public meetings have been scheduled – please see the enclosed announcement. This schedule will be circulated to over 200 individual citizens, municipalities, organizations, and agencies on our nomination review mailing lists. This meeting schedule will also be posted on the ACEC Program website at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/acecUpdates.htm> and on the nominators' website at <http://savethehousatonic.org>. The **full nomination document** is available online at the nominators' website, and printed copies are available for on-site review at the Town and City Halls, at the Lee, Lenox, and Pittsfield public libraries, and at the offices of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in Pittsfield, MassAudubon's Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Lenox, Berkshire Natural Resources Council in Pittsfield, and Green Berkshires in Great Barrington.

Following these meetings, ACEC staff will consult with the nominating committee and evaluate the need for additional public information meetings. The ACEC Program and **I will assess the progress and status of the public participation process, and notify you and the communities about scheduling either more information meetings or the required public hearing.**

When we are ready to schedule a **public hearing** located in one of the communities, 30 days prior to the hearing a notice will be placed in local or regional newspapers and the *Environmental Monitor*, which is published online by the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office at <http://www.mass.gov/envir/mepa/index.htm>. Notice will also be sent to you and other interested citizens, organizations and agencies on our distribution list. The purpose of the public hearing is to formally receive oral and written comments regarding the resources of the nominated area, the proposed boundary, and the appropriateness of ACEC designation. Following the public hearing, there will be a final **ten-day comment period** for the submission of additional written comments.

I will make a **decision regarding ACEC designation** and the final boundary within 60 days of the public hearing. The decision will be based upon the information included in the nomination, additional information gathered in the course of the public review, written public comment received in the course of the review, testimony received at the public hearing, an environmental analysis conducted by DCR's ACEC Program and other Executive Office of Energy and

Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) agency staff, and the criteria listed in the ACEC Regulations at 301 CMR 12.09.

I encourage the nominating committee to attend the forthcoming public information meetings, and to help **publicize the nomination** review in these communities. An important part of the nomination review is to **educate citizens** about the value and significance of the environmental resources that are located in your communities and that you share with one another.

Another important aspect of ACEC nomination is to identify or clarify long-term environmental stewardship and community preservation goals and strategies to implement the purpose of an ACEC designation. To this end, **as part of the review process, I am soliciting commitments from municipal boards and commissions and any interested parties to participate in a future ACEC stewardship committee, if the nominated area is designated** as an ACEC at the conclusion of the review process.

As mentioned above, additional resource information will be gathered throughout the review. For any questions and additional information, the principal contact person for the nomination review is ACEC Program Director Elizabeth Sorenson. Ms. Sorenson can be reached at (617) 626-1394, or by email at [elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us](mailto:elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us).

Sincerely,



Ian A. Bowles  
Secretary

Attachment: Schedule of public information meetings