

Re: MEPA Regs Interim Protocols

March 10,2021

*1972 's Article 97 from the Massachusetts state constitution-The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment; and the protection of the people in their right to the conservation, development, and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air, and other natural resources is hereby declared to be a public purpose.*

To [MEPA-regs@mass.gov](mailto:MEPA-regs@mass.gov),

We believe both interim protocols should be connected ,addressing climate change adaptation and resiliency and outreach to the impacted environmental justice population. Establish a new threshold- Areas of Critical Environmental Justice Concern (ACEJC) as suggested by environmental justice organizations in 1999.

Checking the ACEJC box on the ENF form then automatically adds more stringent state oversight . No exemptions from environmental review should be permitted, not for “re mediation” and not for 121A Projects. Outreach to environmental justice communities is meaningless if the projects in their neighborhoods are exempt from review. And strategies for EJ outreach should not be left up to the proponent ,accountability standards should be prescribed by the MEPA office .

Boston neighborhoods who historically have been impacted by greater exposure to environmental hazards are similarly greatly affected by climate change. Urban heat islands predominate in areas with fewer shade trees, more impervious pavements, and poor air quality.

As currently written , the state’s EJ Policy only applies to projects that exceed certain thresholds. Not included are increases in impervious area and tree removal , critical factors with climate resiliency.

**There is no follow up to the questions in the proposed addendum-**

*I. Climate Risks Based on Project Location-*

*A. Will the project result in a net increase in impervious area at the project site?\_ Yes \_ No; If yes, specify the net new (\_\_\_\_\_sf) and total (\_\_\_\_\_sf) impervious area on the site.*

*Are existing trees being removed as part of the project? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No*

Extreme heat coupled with the loss of tree canopy and an increase in impervious pavement is a public health emergency in Lower Roxbury. Development projects in a defined EJ neighborhood should be required to include an arborist survey in the environmental review process.

A related concern- that review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission for impacts to historic resources should require consultation with the relevant governing historic protection agency. Too often ,MHC decisions for *No Adverse Effect* are made without access to the local community’s shared knowledge .

Sincerely,

Alison Pultinas for Friends of Melnea Cass Boulevard