

MEPA Advisory Committee

January 28, 2022, 1:00PM-3:00PM

Remote Meeting

Organizations Represented/In Attendance

- American Council of Engineering Companies of MA
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Boston Harbor Now
- Cape Cod Commission
- Charles River Watershed Association
- Connecticut River Conservancy
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Eversource
- Green Roots
- MassAudubon
- MassRecycle
- Massachusetts Highway Association
- Massachusetts Water Works Association
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association of MA
- National Grid
- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), New England Chapter
- VHB

State agency/authority attendees

- EEA EJ Director
- CZM
- DCR
- DER
- MassDEP
- MDAR
- NHESP
- MassPort
- MWRA
- EOHEd
- DHCD

Meeting Summary

The MEPA Advisory Committee continued to review MEPA definitions (301 CMR 11.02) for potential revisions and began the discussion of revisions/additions to the MEPA thresholds (301 CMR 11.03). Specifically, discussion of MEPA definitions included “Alteration”, “Agency Action”, “Relatedness”, “Financial Assistance”, “Routine Maintenance” and “Replacement Project.” Committee members discussed the potential for increased review of major programmatic actions or financial incentive programs that would result in environmental impacts (for example, DHCD approvals under Housing Choice legislation that would influence future construction). The potential for increased programmatic review to streamline future review of subsequent projects was noted. Committee members discussed climate change effects/impacts, and how they should be reviewed at MEPA. Regarding repair, replacement, and/or maintenance projects, MWRA and National Grid noted the need to clarify review procedures for work related to maintaining existing (aging) infrastructure that pre-dated environmental regulation.

Regarding thresholds, the MEPA Office requested feedback on Land thresholds. Agencies noted that ecological restoration projects and habitat management efforts could be treated differently. Committee members noted concerns regarding projects that involve a significant amount of tree clearing and/or addition of impervious area. Committee members discussed whether and how a threshold related to tree removal could be added, depending on the goals to be achieved. Additionally, the impacts of new impervious area on water quality, including impacts to cold water fisheries, were discussed.

Next Steps

The next meeting of the MEPA Advisory committee will be held on Friday, February 11th. The meeting will continue discussion of potential revisions to the MEPA thresholds at 301 CMR 11.03. Power point presentations summarizing discussion at each meeting will be made available on the MEPA website.