

MEPA Interim Protocol on Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency

Issuance Date: [TBD], 2021

[Anticipated] Effective Date: October 1, 2021

Background

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Interim Protocol on Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency (“Interim Protocol”) complies with Governor Baker’s [Executive Order 569](#), which directs the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) to coordinate efforts across the Commonwealth to strengthen the resilience of communities, prepare for the impacts of climate change, and proactively plan for and mitigate damage from extreme weather events. It complements the 2010 MEPA Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Policy and Protocol, which requires analysis of a project’s contribution to GHG emissions and commitments to increase energy efficiency to reduce emissions.

The Interim Protocol builds on the analysis and recommendations of the 2018 [Massachusetts Integrated State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan \(SHMCAP\)](#), the Commonwealth’s primary risk assessment and risk reduction strategy for natural hazards and climate change. The SHMCAP’s mission is to reduce the statewide loss of life, and protect natural resources, property, infrastructure, public health, and the economy from natural hazards and climate change impacts through the development of a comprehensive and integrated hazard mitigation and climate adaptation program. It expands upon the previous planning efforts of the Commonwealth’s 2013 State Hazard Mitigation Plan and the 2011 Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report. The SHMCAP acknowledges that climate change is already worsening natural hazards and extreme weather events, and incorporates the best available scientific data and projections to position the Commonwealth to reduce risk and increase resilience.

The Interim Protocol furthers the Commonwealth’s efforts to support state agencies and municipalities in implementing the SHMCAP, and additional projects and strategies to promote climate change resilience and adaptation. It includes the efforts of the [Resilient Massachusetts Action Team \(RMAT\)](#), the inter-agency steering committee responsible for implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of the SHMCAP. The RMAT is advancing prioritized global (or cross-agency) actions from the SHMCAP, including the “Climate Resilience Design Standards and Guidelines” project. This effort will develop resilience standards, guidelines, and a project risk screening tool using the best available climate science data and projections for Massachusetts in three critical areas: sea level rise/storm surge, extreme precipitation (urban or riverine flooding), and extreme heat. The RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool has been launched and is publicly available [here](#).

Interim Protocol

Effective [TBD], 2021, all new projects filing with the MEPA Office will be required to print the output report generated from the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool and submit it as an attachment to the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) or Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) submittal.

In addition, a new section entitled, “Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Section” will be added to the ENF to solicit information regarding adaptation strategies the project will employ to address climate risks. The revisions to the ENF are included as Attachment A to this Interim Protocol, and will be incorporated into the template ENF to be made available on the MEPA website.

In completing the Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Section of the ENF, the Proponents are encouraged, but not required at this time, to utilize the recommended design standards and associated Tier 1/2/3 methodologies outlined in the output report from the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool. However, Proponents are requested to respond to a [user feedback survey](#) on the RMAT website, which will be used by the RMAT team to further refine the tool. Proponents are also encouraged to consult general guidance and best practices as described in the [RMAT Climate Resilience Design Guidelines](#).

The RMAT team is expected to hold stakeholder sessions regarding the Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool in Summer 2021, and user guides and training videos are currently available on the RMAT tool [website](#). This MEPA Interim Protocol is intended to gather project-level data in a standardized manner that will both inform the MEPA process and assist the RMAT team in evaluating the accuracy and effectiveness of the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool. Once this testing process is completed, the MEPA Office anticipates developing a formal Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Policy through a public stakeholder process. Questions about the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool can be directed to rmat@mass.gov.

Effective Period

This MEPA Interim Protocol is anticipated to take effect for new project filings starting on **October 1, 2021**. Consistent with 301 CMR 11.05(5), the final version of this Interim Protocol and revisions to the ENF form will be published in the *Environmental Monitor* at least two weeks prior to the effective date.

This Interim Protocol will remain in place until further amended. It is anticipated that this protocol will be superseded by a formal Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Policy, which will be developed through a public stakeholder process led by the MEPA Office.

Attachment A: ENF Revisions
Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency

ATTACHMENTS:

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9. Printout of output report from RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool, available [here](#).

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[NEW] CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY SECTION

This section of the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) solicits information and disclosures related to climate change adaptation and resiliency, in accordance with the MEPA Interim Protocol on Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency (the “MEPA Interim Protocol”) issued on [TBD], 2021. The Interim Protocol builds on the analysis and recommendations of the 2018 [Massachusetts Integrated State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan \(SHMCAP\)](#), and incorporates the efforts of the [Resilient Massachusetts Action Team \(RMAT\)](#), the inter-agency steering committee responsible for implementation, monitoring, and maintenance of the SHMCAP, including the “Climate Resilience Design Standards and Guidelines” project. The RMAT team recently released the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool, which is available [here](#).

The MEPA Interim Protocol is intended to gather project-level data in a standardized manner that will both inform the MEPA process and assist the RMAT team in evaluating the accuracy and effectiveness of the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool. Once this testing process is completed, the MEPA Office anticipates developing a formal Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Policy through a public stakeholder process. Questions about the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool can be directed to rmat@mass.gov.

All Proponents must complete the following section, referencing as appropriate the results of the output report generated by the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool and attached to the ENF. In completing this section, Proponents are encouraged, but not required at this time, to utilize the recommended design standards and associated Tier 1/2/3 methodologies outlined in the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool to analyze the project design. However, Proponents are requested to respond to a [user feedback survey](#) on the RMAT website, which will be used by the RMAT team to further refine the tool. Proponents are also encouraged to consult general guidance and best practices as described in the [RMAT Climate Resilience Design Guidelines](#).

Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency Strategies

- I. Has the project taken measures to adapt to climate change for any of the climate parameters analyzed in the RMAT Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool (sea level rise/storm surge, extreme precipitation (urban or riverine flooding), extreme heat)? ___ Yes ___ No

Note: Climate adaptation and resiliency strategies include actions that seek to reduce vulnerability to anticipated climate risks and improve resiliency for future climate conditions. Examples of climate adaptation and resiliency strategies include flood barriers, increased stormwater infiltration, living shorelines, elevated infrastructure, increased tree canopy, etc. Projects should address any planning priorities identified by the affected municipality through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program or other planning efforts, and should consider a flexible adaptive pathways approach, an adaptation best practice that encourages design strategies that adapt over time to respond to changing climate conditions. General guidance and best practices for designing for climate risk are available [here](#).

A. If no, explain why.

B. If yes, describe the measures the project will take, including identifying the planning horizon and climate data used in designing project components. If applicable, specify the return period and design storm used (e.g., 100-year, 24-hour storm).

C. Is the project contributing to regional adaptation strategies? Yes No; If yes, describe.

II. Has the Proponent considered alternative locations for the project in light of climate change risks?
 Yes No

A. If no, explain why.

B. If yes, describe alternatives considered.

III. Is the project located in Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage (LSCSF) or Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF) as defined in the Wetlands Protection Act? Yes No; If yes, describe how/whether proposed changes to the site's topography (including the addition of fill) will result in changes to floodwater flow paths and/or velocities that could impact adjacent properties or the functioning of the floodplain. *General guidance on providing this analysis can be found in the CZM/MassDEP Coastal Wetlands Manual, available [here](#).*