



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Maura T. Healey
GOVERNOR

Kimberley Driscoll
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Rebecca L. Tepper
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1081
<http://www.mass.gov/eea>

DETERMINATION OF NATURAL RESOURCE VALUE

PROJECT: Proposed Change in Use of Land on Bare Cove Park Drive in the Town of Hingham
MUNICIPALITY: Hingham
EEA FILE NUMBER: A97_017_131
PROJECT PROPONENT: Town of Hingham
DATE: October 03, 2025

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 3, § 5A, in order to use for another purpose or otherwise dispose of land or an interest in land subject to Article 97 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (“Article 97”), a public entity must, *inter alia*, “identify replacement land or an interest in land, which is not already subject to said Article XCVII, in a comparable location and *that is of equal or greater natural resource value, as determined by the secretary of energy and environmental affairs . . .*” (emphasis added). This document provides the required determination of natural resource value as to the above-referenced proposal (“Project”).

This determination constitutes solely a determination of natural resource value pursuant to M.G.L. c. 3, § 5A(a)(ii) and does not indicate that the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs takes any position on the Project or on whether it complies with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (“EEA”) Article 97 Land Disposition Policy. This determination reflects the independent analysis of EEA for advisory purposes and does not create any right, benefit, or duty, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party in any judicial or administrative matter.

Project Description:

The Project proposed by the Town of Hingham involves the change in use of 5.387 acres of land (“Impacted Land”) currently held for Article 97 purposes that was deeded by the United States government to the Town of Hingham Select Board. The Impacted Land is a portion of a former naval ammunition depot and training station, which consists of approximately 460 acres and was transferred to the Town to be used for public park and recreation purposes. The Town is proposing to change the use of the Impacted Land in order to construct a “Center for Active Living.” As mitigation for this change in use of land subject to Article 97, the Town of Hingham is proposing to transfer 6.847 acres of land

(“Replacement Land”) from the care, custody and control of the School Committee to the Conservation Commission and dedicate the Replacement Land to Article 97 purposes.

The Project is described in more detail in the Alternatives Analysis and Supplemental Materials which are posted on EEA’s website¹.

Information Considered:

This determination is based on a review of the Alternatives Analysis, other materials submitted, and EEA’s independent analysis. EEA analysis included site visits to view the Impacted Land and Replacement Land on August 14, 2025 and the use of GIS and EEA’s Article 97 Natural Resource Site Evaluation Tool (“NRSET”) to characterize the Natural Resource Value of the Impacted Land and Replacement Land. The results of the NRSET evaluation (which were verified by EEA) are shown in Appendix D and Appendix F of the Alternatives Analysis.

Characterization of Impacted Land:

The Impacted Land is primarily wooded and possesses the Natural Resource Values typical of that land cover type. The land is partially disturbed by a building previously used as a Naval Ammunition Depot and associated infrastructure for that building, which is currently abandoned and is not used by the town. As to the NRSET evaluation, the most significant findings are that portions of the land are mapped as Prime Forest and Prime Farmland, that the site is within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, and that parts of the site are in two different EPA Ecoregions. While considered a public park by the National Park Service, the Impacted Land is not currently used for passive or active recreation, and a portion of the site is mostly paved, have minimal ecological value and not open to the public due to safety concerns. The land is subject to oversight and restrictions from NPS who has already reviewed and approved this project.

Characterization of Replacement Land:

The Replacement Land consists of primarily wooded land and wetlands and possesses the Natural Resource Values typical of those land cover types. Active recreation does not occur on the land, but the area is currently being used for passive recreation. The land directly abuts and would expand approximately 53 acres of existing protected land under the care, custody and control of the Conservation Commission. The NRSET indicated that hiking trails were present and identified portions of the land as Prime Forest Land, Prime Farmland, DEP wetlands, and Aquifer Protection Zone. It also found that a portion of the site was in one of the two EPA ecoregions found on the Impacted Land.

Determination:

The Replacement Land is of equal or greater Natural Resource Value as compared to the Impacted Land. Both the Impacted Land and Replacement Land have Natural Resource Value consistent with wooded land cover and share many of the same layers mapped by NRSET. The Impacted Land is mapped as an Area of Environmental Concern, however the analysis provided in Appendix E of the Alternatives Analysis states that the proposed work “does not demonstrate the potential to adversely affect” the Area of Environmental Concern, which EEA has reviewed and accepted. The Replacement Land additionally provides more opportunity for passive recreation, expands existing conservation land, permanently

¹ [https://www.mass.gov/info-details/article-97-an-act-preserving-open-space-in-the-commonwealth-mgl-c-3-ss-5a#:~:text=97\)%20establishes%20a%20right%20to,or%20easements%20subject%20to%20Art.](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/article-97-an-act-preserving-open-space-in-the-commonwealth-mgl-c-3-ss-5a#:~:text=97)%20establishes%20a%20right%20to,or%20easements%20subject%20to%20Art.)

protects an access trail to the abutting conservation land, contains wetland habitat and aquifer protection zones, is not previously disturbed and is larger in size as compared to the Impacted Land.