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DETERMINATION OF NATURAL RESOURCE VALUE

PROJECT: Proposed Disposition of Lands in Lakeville and Taunton for  
Transportation Purposes  
MUNICIPALITY: Lakeville & Taunton  
EEA FILE NUMBER: A97\_023\_293  
PROJECT PROPONENT: Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
DATE: February 03, 2026

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 involves two separate transportation projects occurring in Taunton and Lakeville, which will be reviewed simultaneously as the impacts are being mitigated by a single parcel. The first of the two projects involves roadway improvements along Route 79 and impacts land subject to Article 97 in both Lakeville and Taunton. These roadway improvements are necessary to provide pedestrian and bicycle access, improve safety and update stormwater infrastructure. Specifically, the permanent easements needed on the Article 97 land are necessary for new stormwater control measures and compliance. The total Article 97 impact for this portion of the Project is 2,297 square feet.

The second portion of this Project involves the replacement of the Scadding Street bridge in the City of Taunton, which is necessary for vehicular and pedestrian safety. The permanent easements being proposed on Article 97 land are necessary to accommodate the new alignment of the roadway and for updated and compliant stormwater infrastructure. In total, 9,774 square feet of permanent easements are being proposed on land subject to Article 97 across the entirety of the Project (“Impacted Land”). As mitigation for the impacts proposed in this Project, the City of Taunton would place a 23,858 square foot parcel (“Replacement Land”) under the care, custody and control of the Conservation Commission.

The Project is described in more detail in the Alternatives Analysis and Supplemental Materials which are posted on EEA’s website<sup>1</sup>.

#### Information Considered:

This determination is based on a review of the Alternatives Analysis, other materials submitted, and EEA’s independent analysis. EEA’s analysis also included a site walk conducted on December 16, 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.

#### Characterization of Impacted Land:

The Impacted Land consisted of multiple strips of land along Route 79 and Scadding Street in Taunton and Lakeville, totaling 9,774 square feet. All of the Impacted Land is under the care, custody and control of the City of Taunton Conservation Commission. The majority of the impacted land is close to the roadway and consists of forest wetland, with natural resource values including aquatic core habitat preservation, protection of water resources (wetlands and 100 year flood zone), prime forest land and small areas mapped as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

#### Characterization of Replacement Land:

The Replacement Land consists of a 23,858 square foot parcel, currently held by the City of Taunton as general municipal land. The parcel is forested wetlands which borders along the Three Mile River and contains natural resource values including Core Wetland and Aquatic habitat, water resource protection (wetlands, riverfront area and 100 year flood zone) and small areas of ACEC.

#### Determination:

The Replacement Land is of equal or greater Natural Resource Value as compared to the Impacted Land. The Impacted Land and Replacement Land share similar natural resource values and Article 97 purposes, most notably water resource protection and habitat protection. The Replacement Land protects a significantly larger area as compared to the Impacted Land and contains much larger areas of water resource and habitat protection.

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<sup>1</sup> [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.)