



# Department of Environmental Protection

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## **Report on Removal of 173 Alford Street Parcel from Mystic River Designated Port Area**

### ***Pursuant to Section 295 of Chapter 238 of the Acts of 2024***

The Mass Leads Act ([Section 295 of Chapter 238 of the Acts of 2024](#)) provides that a parcel of land located at 173 Alford Street in Boston (the Parcel) “shall be removed from, and not be considered to be within, the boundaries or a part of the Mystic River designated port area . . .” (Mystic DPA). The Act further provides that such “removal shall only be for the purpose of converting the parcel into a professional soccer stadium and a waterfront park.” The Act further provides that such “removal shall only be for the purpose of converting the parcel into a professional soccer stadium and a waterfront park.”

The Act states that prior to the removal of the Parcel from the Mystic DPA, MassDEP shall “review said removal and report to the secretary of energy and environmental affairs and the joint committee on environment and natural resources on said removal and provide any recommendations.” This report reflects that review.

### **Designated Port Areas**

#### ***Background***

In 1978, the Commonwealth established Designated Port Areas (DPAs) as part of the newly approved Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Plan, the result of a six-year collaboration between the Commonwealth and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration pursuant to the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

The Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is responsible for the review of DPA Master Plans; establishing, mapping, and periodically reviewing DPA boundaries; and administering DPA boundaries.

MassDEP reviews projects proposed in DPAs pursuant to M.G.L. c. 91 (Chapter 91) and associated regulations, 310 CMR 9.00, which govern the licensing of structures and uses in the tidelands/jurisdictional areas of DPAs. Chapter 91 regulations authorize MassDEP to license the placement of fill in DPA tidelands, as well as allowable structures and uses in areas within Chapter 91 and DPA jurisdiction. While those regulations allow limited supporting and accessory uses on filled tidelands within DPAs, they require a large majority of DPA tidelands to be used or reserved for water-dependent-industrial or limited temporary uses.

## **Mystic Designated Port Area**

The Mystic DPA is within the municipalities of Boston (Charlestown), Everett, and Chelsea. Direct access to deep-water (-20 feet MLW or deeper) and a channel width of up to 1,000 feet are available at all DPA properties on the Mystic River. Uses include petroleum storage and distribution; recent shifts from manufacturing to clustered warehouses; liquified natural gas (LNG) import terminals (the only LNG terminals in New England), some connecting to regional pipelines; the 54-acre Chelsea Produce Market (a wholesale food distributing facility); heavy freight operations with dedicated truck routes; and Boston Autoport. The DPA also contains the Mystic Substation which continues to serve Boston, Everett, and surrounding areas. The Everett portion of the DPA contains the recently closed Mystic Generating Station, once one of the largest power stations in Massachusetts.

## **173 Alford Street Parcel**

The Parcel is part of a larger system of nearly two miles of industrial port facilities along the Mystic River and adjoining waters of Island End River and the Little Mystic Channel. The Parcel comprises 30.7 acres of land, which abuts 12.4 acres of watersheet within the Mystic River. The Parcel includes 1,400 linear feet of developed shoreline. It is bounded on the north and west by city streets and abuts the Mystic Generating Station Units 8 & 9, which were retired on May 31, 2024. The Parcel contains approximately 16 acres of historically filled tidelands and 12.4 acres of flowed tidelands subject to M.G.L. Chapter 91 and the Waterways regulations.

The Parcel is a fully developed site that has been used for energy generation and industrial uses requiring direct access to Boston Harbor since at least 1897. The Parcel contains the shuttered Mystic Generating Station, Units 1 – 7.

Removal of the Parcel constitutes a loss of 8.3% of the Mystic DPA land area (30 acres) and 4.4% of the accessible shoreline within the Mystic DPA.

## **Recommendations**

The removal of the Parcel could have direct and indirect adverse effects on the capacity of the adjacent Mystic DPA lands and waters to support the ongoing Water Dependent Industrial (WDI) uses in the area that are within MassDEP's licensing jurisdiction under Chapter 91. Potential adverse effects may include conflicts between the proposed stadium and waterfront park and adjacent WDI uses. To avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts, the design and build-out of the stadium and waterfront park should involve evaluation of the following issues and actions:

- **Navigation Conflicts:** New or expanded non-WDI water-based private transportation and activities (i.e., recreational marinas, small craft launches, etc.) associated with the stadium and park are expected to increase within the adjacent Mystic River. These water-based activities create the potential for navigational conflicts between large-vessel operators, water-based public transportation, and recreational boaters. Establishment of new non-WDI water-based public transportation should evaluate and address such navigation issues to ensure boater safety and to protect the DPA's ability to support ongoing WDI uses.

- **Potentially Incompatible Uses:** The juxtaposition of maritime industrial uses in the DPA with a soccer stadium and public waterfront park will likely create generalized conflicts between these very different uses. Chapter 91 licensing standards require proponents to avoid significant incompatibility of uses.
- **Reduction of DPA Utilization:** Removal of the Parcel from the DPA should be planned so that it does not interfere with the development and growth of other new and evolving WDI uses related to the generation, storage, and transmission of clean energy, as well as blue economy technologies such as marine technology manufacturing and testing (e.g., marine robotics, autonomous underwater vehicles), and marine bioscience research and development facilities.
- **Projected Sea Level Rise:** The Parcel is susceptible to increasing flooding from storm surge and sea level rise because of its location and history as filled tidelands. Development of the Parcel, which is expected to include a request for an extended Chapter 91 license term, would need to address potential impacts on the DPA and on the surrounding area from coastal storms and future sea level rise. Such development should facilitate plans to implement resilience measures that help to buffer inland properties from more severe coastal storms and increased precipitation.
- **Environmental Justice Issues:** Removal of the Parcel from the DPA is an opportunity to evaluate potential impacts on environmental justice communities. Additionally, opportunities for enhanced public access to and activation of the waterfront in environmental justice communities should be explored.