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September 22, 2006

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME : Airport Vegetation Management GEIR Update
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Statewide
EOEA NUMBER : 13866
PROJECT PROPONENT : Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission with MassDEP
and Massport
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : August 23, 2006

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), this document provides an update to MEPA on the ongoing Statewide Vegetation Management Program (SVMP) for vegetation management at airports in Massachusetts, as controlled by the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission (MAC) and the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport).

The SVMP program has been conducted over the past 12 years, following the guidance developed under the Final Generic Environmental Impact Report (GEIR) (EOEA # 8978) issued in October 1993. The update presented in this ENF is submitted in response to the MEPA Certificate on the GEIR Update/Expanded ENF (EOEA #12092), issued in January, 2000 relative to a previously required update on the implementation of the SVMP. As well as providing a statewide update to previous MEPA filings, this ENF also reports on specific VMP projects including one for the Norwood Memorial Airport which is within the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The Norwood Airport VMP, first permitted in 1997, is located entirely within the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog ACEC. The Norwood Airport contains 310 acres of wetlands, of which 100 acres are within the Vegetated Management Area. These wetlands support several

rare species and habitat classified as Core Habitat for the Endangered Least Bittern. DCR's ACEC program has stated in its comment letter that there are six potential vernal pools that have been identified in the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's (NHESP) aerial photo identification maps for the area of wetlands adjacent to the airport and four state-listed rare species (including the de-listed Spotted Turtle). Therefore, I encourage the proponents to continue implementation of the Norwood Airport VMP. This should include certification and protection of vernal pools, monitoring of rare species if required according to consultation with NHESP, and possibly an invasive species monitoring and management plan. I have been advised that there are portions of Zone IIs covering parts of the wetlands surrounding the Norwood Airport. Although these Zone IIs are not within the Vegetated Management Area, the proponents should carefully evaluate herbicide treatments for potential impacts to water supply, wetlands, and wildlife and rare species habitats.

The *VMP Guidance Document to Conservation Commissions*, required by the Secretary's Certificate in 2000 and approved by the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in 2004, is included as part of this ENF. I commend the proponents on the *VMP Guidance Document* which should prove to be useful for permit review of VMPs. I advise the proponents that future VMP applications or modifications to existing applications should follow MassDEP's *2006 Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidance for Inland Wetlands* to ensure that projects do not adversely affect wildlife habitat. The evaluation and any avoidance, minimization or mitigation efforts should be directed toward protecting existing wildlife habitat functions (pre-vegetation management). I encourage MAC and DEP to work together and to periodically update the *VMP Guidance Document* incorporating changes from the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations guidance and policies, such as the *2006 Wildlife Habitat Protection Guidance for Inland Wetlands* and the *2006 Massachusetts River and Stream Crossing Standards*.

The ENF recommends in section "Future Emphasis of Invasive Species Control" that infestations be controlled only when they are not threatened with constant reintroduction due to the presence of dense stands of the same species in uncontrolled areas adjacent to the airport. Since disturbed areas can result in increased growth of invasive species, MassDEP suggests in its comment letter, and I concur, that the decision on the extent of required invasive control efforts be determined on a case-by-case basis. MassDEP has advised that more detail on each site will be needed to make these decisions including: pre-vegetation management extent of invasive species; current extent of invasive species; and details of efforts taken to eradicate invasive species. Preferably, the invasive species will be mapped (pre and post management). I remind the proponent that elimination of invasive species not present prior to the project will be required prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Compliance.

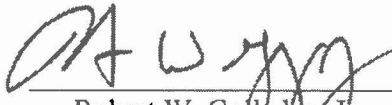
MassDEP has also stated in its comment letter that more evaluation is required for mitigating and/or monitoring of hydrologic changes for each specific project and/or airport. The trend of implementing successive projects over time may ultimately result in long-term cumulative changes to local hydrology that could possibly be avoided with proper planning and evaluation. MAC and MassDEP should work together to develop a monitoring program to be

implemented to gain a better understanding of the potential hydrologic changes that may result from vegetation management.

Upon review of the ENF and the comments received, I find that the ENF clearly meets the standard for adequacy contained in the MEPA regulations. I request that the proponents carefully consider the comments on the ENF where additional information may need to be developed.

September 22, 2006

Date


Robert W. Golledge, Jr.

Comments received:

09/05/05	Massachusetts Historical Commission
09/06/06	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
09/11/06	Department of Environmental Protection, Boston
09/12/06	Department of Conservation and Recreation's ACEC Program

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