



August 21, 2019

Jerome Grafe  
Regional Planner  
DEP Waterways Regulation Program  
1 Winter Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108

By Email: [jerome.grafe@state.ma.us](mailto:jerome.grafe@state.ma.us)

Re: Mystic River Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing, Chapter 91 Dredge Permit, License No. W19-5587

Dear Mr. Grafe,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) regarding the above-referenced Chapter 91 Waterways License Application submitted by DCR. We enthusiastically support this important infrastructure project and commend DCR and Encore Boston Harbor for their efforts to move this towards implementation. We are submitting comments regarding the dredging permit application for this project.

MyRWA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations. We seek to protect and restore clean water and the natural environment and to promote responsible stewardship of our natural resources. In addition, we work to improve public access to water bodies and shorelines throughout the watershed, and especially for environmental justice populations whose recreational opportunities have been limited by the concentration of industrial development along the edges of the river. MyRWA represents the interests of more than 600,000 residents in 22 towns and cities within the watershed, including Somerville and Everett.

The Applicant seeks a Chapter 91 license that authorizes dredging to remove 552 cubic yards of material from the Mystic River to construct a bicycle and pedestrian bridge between Somerville and Everett. We believe that the applicant is consistent with the Waterways Regulation to minimize the amount of fill for any water-dependent use on flowed tidelands.

However, we have two key concerns that we would like to address in this letter. We request a rigorous monitoring and documentation process to ensure that the river dredging activities meet the following criteria:

- (1) Minimize the environmental impact to the river and exposure to contaminants and;
- (2) Avoid interference with diadromous fish runs.

### **Dredging Process**

The Department should stipulate that the mechanical dredging of sediments conform to best management practices for hazardous waste removal. The license should provide for close supervision, including advance notice to the Department of each stage of the operations and detailed information regarding, and Department approval of, all sediment dewatering, transport, and offloading arrangements.



The license should also require construction best practices that minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to the nearby saltmarsh along the Harborwalk of Encore Boston Harbor. This living shoreline, comprised primarily of Spartina species, is still in the establishment phase and is sensitive to disturbance.

### **Time of Year Restrictions**

We request that the DEP support the time of year restriction for no in-water work recommended by Division on Marine Fisheries in their comments for this license. The Mystic River is one of the largest river herring migrations in Massachusetts with more than 600,000 river herring documented in 2018. Every measure should be taken to ensure that this population is not affected.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, we are supportive of this important transportation improvement project but urge the state to monitor and document the dredging process to protect the environment and minimize risks associated with contaminated sediments. We would like to be notified of further permitting and construction milestones. If you have any questions or require additional information please contact MyRWA at (781) 316-3438 or by emailing [patrick@mysticriver.org](mailto:patrick@mysticriver.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Herron".

Patrick Herron  
Executive Director  
Mystic River Watershed Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber Christoffersen".

Amber Christoffersen  
Greenway Director  
Mystic River Watershed Association

CC:

Dan Driscoll, DCR  
Ruth Helfeld, DCR  
Ginna Johnson, DCR  
Chris Gordon, Encore Boston Harbor  
Zoya Puri, Encore Boston Harbor