



May 30, 2019

Tim Czerwienski, Project Manager
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Re: MyRWA Comments on Suffolk Downs Redevelopment PDA

Dear Mr. Czerwienski:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the largest single redevelopment project in the Mystic River Watershed, which spans 21 municipalities from Reading through Revere. The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), was founded in 1972 to protect and restore the river, its tributaries, and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations. We provided detailed comments on the DEIR/DPIR in December 2018 and will not repeat them here. After reviewing subsequent materials, we want to emphasize the following few points.

As described in detail in project documents and elsewhere, the Suffolk Downs site, like Boston's Seaport District, is highly prone to climate change exacerbated coastal flooding (see Figure 1 on page 2). Unlike the Seaport District, all the planning and permitting for this site is taking place post-Superstorm Sandy and Climate Ready Boston. Also unlike the Seaport, this site is being redeveloped by a single entity with a twenty-year build-out plan.

Given both these factors, it would be irresponsible for this project not to include, up front, the long-term means to protect itself and its surrounding neighborhood from coastal flooding. This would require a coastal flood barrier stretching from the east side of Constitution Beach in East Boston across the landward edge of Belle Isle Marsh out to Winthrop Parkway. Such a barrier, which should include such multiple benefits as a bike path and/or improved coastal habitat, is essential to protecting the MBTA Blue Line, Bennington Street, the Suffolk Downs site itself, and several existing residential neighborhoods.

We ask that a condition of this permit approval be a legally binding MOU among HYM, state landowners (Massport, MBTA and Mass DCR), Boston and Revere that commits these entities to the planning and construction of such a barrier. This would be an excellent opportunity to use an innovative tool such as District Improvement Financing, whereby the state could use its bonding authority to finance such a flood barrier, to be repaid through property taxes generated by the Suffolk Downs development.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the largest development in the Mystic River Watershed. We look forward to working with HYM and its host communities to create a thriving, climate-prepared, new neighborhood. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or comments at (781) 316-3438 or julie.wormser@mysticriver.org.

Sincerely,

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

Patrick Herron
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Wormser".

Julie Wormser
Deputy Director

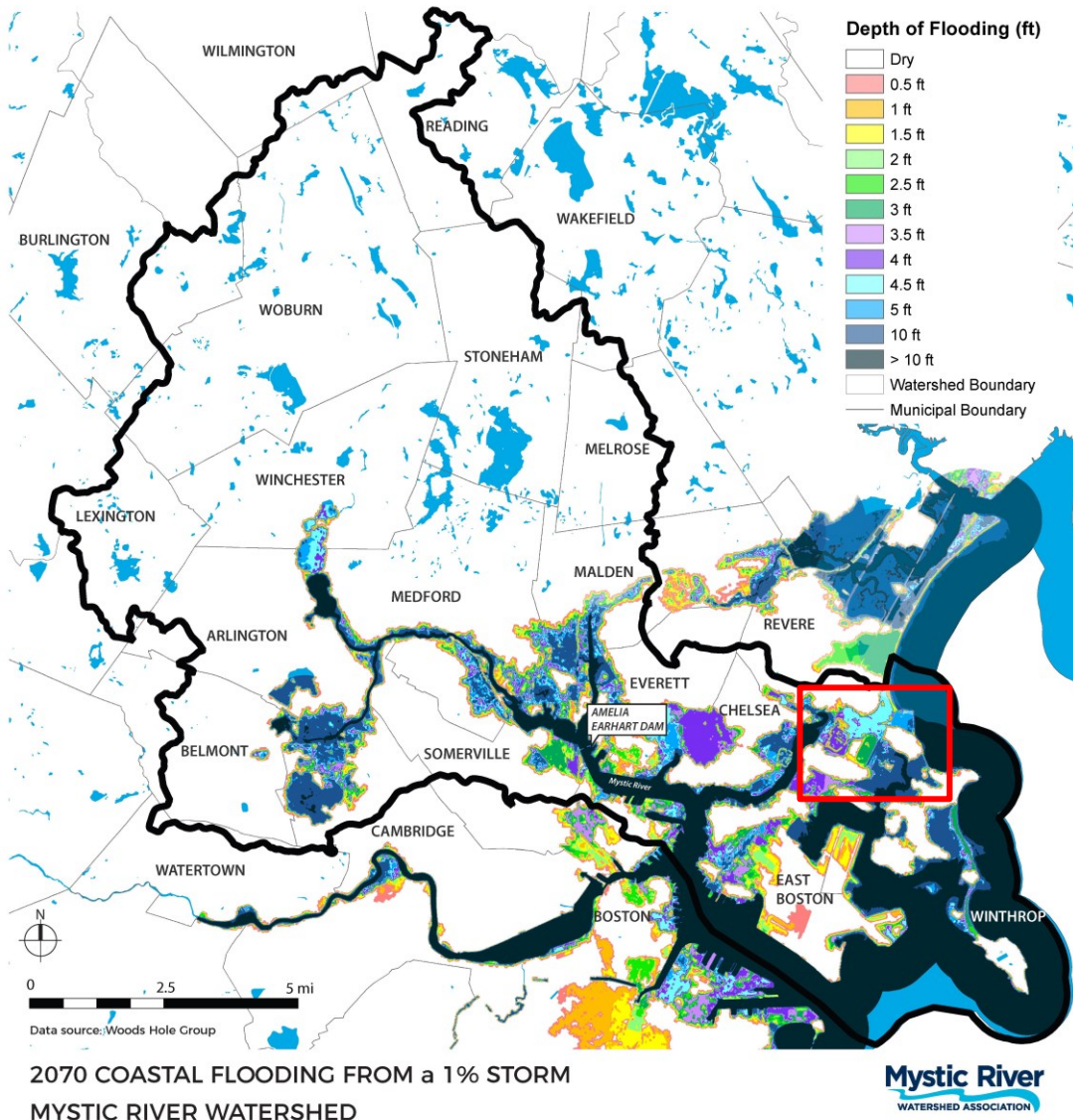


Figure 1. This map series show the depths of flooding for the 1% storm in 2070. In addition to flooding via Belle Isle Marsh, there are two other flood pathways: Revere Beach and Chelsea Creek. The datasets are derived from the Boston Harbor Flood Risk Model (BH-FRM) for sea level rise and coastal storm simulations. Data provided by Woods Hole Group.