



May 5, 2026

MEPA Comments RE: DEIR Weymouth / Southfield Redevelopment Authority
MWRA Water System Admission
EEA #16841

To the Executive Officer of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

As President of the Back River Watershed Association, Inc., I am writing to submit my comments to support the EEA # 16841 Weymouth /Southfield Redevelopment Authority, MWRA Water System Admission.

The Weymouth Back River is sub- basin of Boston Harbor. It is designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern in 1982, and also designated a Local Scenic River, a Wildlife Sanctuary, and One of Massachusetts' Special Places. These designations were achieved by Back River Watershed Association Founder Mary F. Toomey of Weymouth.

As background, Mary F. Toomey, founder of the Back River Watershed Association, worked diligently to protect the Weymouth Back River and estuary. She was the recipient of many prestigious awards, including the Gulf of Maine Visionary Award. She worked for decades with Dr. Mary Sears, USNC and Oceanographer at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to save the Weymouth Back River and create nine open-space public parks in the communities of Weymouth and Hingham. These beautiful parks include Webb Memorial State Park, Abigail Adams State Park, and Stodder's Neck Park managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Also, Great Esker Park (237 acres) and Stephen Rennie Herring Run Park, managed by the Town of Weymouth and Bare Cove Park (484 acres), More-Brewer Reservation, Back River Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Bouve Conservation Land managed by the town of Hingham. True champions for our environment, the efforts of the two Marys led to the restoration of the entire Back River area. Today, it is the responsibility of both the towns of Weymouth and Hingham to honor the ACEC agreement they share and continue their legacy by working to preserve this remarkable natural resource for future generations.

The Weymouth Back River serves as the boundary between the towns of Weymouth and Hingham since 1635. The two largest parks bordering the river are Great Esker Park on the Weymouth side and Bare Cove Park on the Hingham side. These beautiful forested parks provide critical habitat for many forms of wildlife and aquatic life. There are over 150 species of birds including many rare species listed with the Audubon Society. The Weymouth Back River supports a valuable estuary providing a nursery for over 30 species of native finfish, shell fish, smelt, eel, and the historic Weymouth Herring Run.

The Weymouth Herring Run is one of Massachusetts most productive herring runs. Weymouth's Whitman's Pond is the spawning ground for thousands of herring during Spring migration. The pond is part of a sensitive resource area and is being treated with herbicides to manage invasive vegetation growth and eutrophication. Historical records from Weymouth in 1648, indicate that herring provided a protein source for the survival of early Weymouth settlers with the help from Native American Indians. Today herring populations have declined

The Back River Watershed Association is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization organized to preserve, protect, and promote the Back River and its watershed in Weymouth, Hingham, and parts of Abington, Rockland, Holbrook & Braintree.

significantly since they are used as bait as a forage fish for other fish species and support aquatic life, wildlife, and birds. Many factors such as over fishing, illegal fishing, and climate change impact herring population. As New England fisheries experience depleting fish stocks, herring are considered a keystone species, and play a vital role in restoring the commercial and recreational fisheries. Herring populations should be protected and increased.

The Back River Watershed Association supports the Town of Weymouth's MWRA Water Supply Application for two reasons. First, it is well known that Weymouth's public drinking water supply system is inadequate with historical records indicating low water levels. In years past, drought conditions were so severe that in 1964-1965 the Weymouth Great Pond Reservoir and was nearly dry. These extreme conditions demand changes to the Weymouth's water supply system. Today, the Town's water conservation plan and drought plan helps to manage these conditions. The additional water Weymouth is seeking from the MWRA is an investment in the health of the community and will ensure Weymouth has sufficient clean water to support its current population, the redevelopment of the South Weymouth Naval Air Station, as well as other future growth.

Second, and equally important, the additional water Weymouth is seeking from the MWRA through its application, allows Weymouth to stop pumping water from the South Cove of Whitmans Pond to Great Pond and also permits the Town to stop pumping ground water by taking its wells off-line (the later also happen to high in PFASs). We believe that these steps, as proposed under the current application, will be of great benefit to the Back River aquifer, the aquatic life, in the estuary, wetlands and wildlife, birds and habitat it supports. It is of great importance there is sufficient water to support the long-term viability of Weymouth's Herring Run and the larger Back River estuary. For these reasons, we believe both Mary Toomey and Dr. Mary Sears would support Weymouth's admission into the MWRA.

However, we do have one concern that we ask you to address in your response. The Town of Weymouth is currently undertaking a Feasibility Study for Restoring Fish Passage via the Mill River to the Great Pond Reservoir. Under the Town's MWRA application, Great Pond Reservoir will supply a constant 3.34 MGD to the Great Pond Water Treatment Plant for distribution to the town and MWRA supply will meet demand that exceeds 3.34 MGD. Our concern is will drawing 3.34 MGD from Great Pond leave enough excess water, especially during the times of herring in/out migration, to flow over the spillway to restore fish passage via the Mill River to Great Pond assuming all other barriers are overcome? Expanding Weymouth's Herring Run, as this feasibility study is investigating, would be an enormous benefit to our local fisheries and beyond.

Our sincere thanks. Please contact me if our organization can be of further assistance.

Linda J. DiAngelo



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