

(To be placed in 4/23/08 MEPA Monitor)

ACEC Nomination Accepted for Full Review by EOEEA

On April 7, 2008 Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Ian A. Bowles accepted for full public review the nomination of the Three Mile River watershed and headwaters of the Segreganset River in southeastern Massachusetts as a new Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Covering approximately 14,200 acres in Dighton (~85 acres), Norton (~5,400 acres), and Taunton (~8,700 acres), the proposed Three Mile River Watershed ACEC includes a wetland and stream complex tributary to the Taunton River and is located within the Taunton River Watershed. Over 8,000 acres in Norton and Taunton encompass parts of two previously designated ACECs - Canoe River Aquifer and Hockomock Swamp.

The nomination was submitted to Secretary Bowles on February 27, 2008 by 11 citizen nominators including Taunton Mayor Charles Crowley and a representative of the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). The resources of the nominated area include fishery habitat; inland wetlands; inland surface waters; water supply areas; natural hazard areas including floodplains; agricultural areas including farmland and forestry land; archaeological and historical resources; habitat resources including state-listed rare species habitat; and special use areas including undeveloped natural areas, public recreational areas, and scenic areas. Information about the ACEC nomination, including a full copy of the nomination report with color maps is available on the nominators' website at <http://www.ibiblio.org/virtualcell/acec/>. Copies of the nomination and maps showing the proposed boundary have been distributed to local officials in the three communities, and may be examined at city and town halls, public libraries, and the SRPEDD office in Taunton. A review copy is also available at the offices of the DCR Bureau of Planning and Resource Protection, 251 Causeway Street, 7th Floor, Boston. Information about the ACEC Program is available at www.state.ma.us/dem/programs/acec.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) ACEC Program will conduct the full review of the nomination over the next 5 to 9 months. The ACEC Program together with the nominators will hold a public information meeting in each ACEC community to educate interested citizens about the nomination, the ACEC Program and the effects of ACEC designation. Each meeting begins at 7 p.m.:

- Monday, 4/28, at Benjamin Friedman Middle School, 500 Norton Avenue, Taunton;
- Tuesday, 4/29, at Norton Public Library, 68 East Main St., Norton; and
- Thursday, 5/1, at Dighton Grange Hall, 1111 Somerset Ave., Dighton.

Following the public meetings the Secretary and ACEC Program staff will determine whether more public information meetings are required before scheduling a public hearing. Public comment is solicited and may be provided at the public hearing or may be sent to

Secretary Ian A. Bowles
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or via email to elizabeth.sorenson@state.ma.us. When the public hearing is scheduled it will be noticed in the *Taunton Daily Gazette* and the *Environmental Monitor*. The Secretary will make a decision whether to designate the nominated area within 60 days following the public hearing. For more information about the ACEC nomination review, please contact Elizabeth Sorenson at (617) 626-1394 or the email above.