



January 13, 2016

Lisa Berry Engler, Boston Harbor Regional Coordinator  
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 800  
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Comments on Draft Boundary Review of the Chelsea Creek  
Designated Port Area, Chelsea, Mass., dated November 23, 2015

Dear Ms. Engler:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Office of Coastal Zone Management's (CZM's) review of the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area in the city of Chelsea (the Chelsea DPA).

By way of background, the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1972 by a group of concerned citizens. MyRWA's mission is to protect and restore – to a healthy state – clean water and the natural environment in the Mystic basin's 22 communities, and to promote responsible stewardship of our natural resources through educational initiatives. As a small organization, MyRWA accomplishes its mission by forging strong links with citizens' groups, governmental agencies, businesses, and universities.

On behalf of our organization's members and supporters, we write to commend the agency for undertaking the boundary review of the Chelsea DPA, the first comprehensive review of this area since 1978, when the DPA was originally established. In particular, we commend you for reaching out to residents of Chelsea and East Boston to encourage their full participation in this important review process.

We will not repeat in detail the comments filed with CZM last spring that addressed what at the time was a planned boundary review (which in turn was in response to a February 3, 2015 request from the City of Chelsea). However, we note that, in general, we support a number of the opinions expressed and observations made to CZM during the spring comment period, in particular by the following: the Chelsea Creek Action Group (April 24); Epsilon Associates (for YIHE Forbes, LLC) (April 9); Cabot Waterfront Co. (April 22); Urban Growth Property Trust (April 23); and Evelyn Dieppa (April 21).

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However, MyRWA would like to make the following additional points, given the current posture of the review process:

1. MyRWA strongly supports CZM's decision to remove the Railroad North and Railroad South planning units from the Chelsea DPA. We do so for the reasons set forth in CZM's November 23, 2015 Draft Boundary Review of the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area.
2. As noted, we appreciate CZM's efforts to involve local residents in the review – in particular, the agency's careful attention to the Commonwealth's environmental justice (EJ) policy, issued in 2014 as Executive Order (EO) 552. We urge CZM to help ensure that community concerns are given the attention they deserve by redoubling its effort to deepen meaningful community involvement and to incorporate into its administrative process the principles of equity that underlie EO 552.
3. We hope that CZM will strongly support the critical next steps in the process of reviewing and planning for and around the Chelsea DPA: (i) the Waterfront Visioning Process, initiated last month; and (ii) the Municipal Harbor Plan process (see Seth Daniel, "Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan Takes a Hit, Plan Thwarted for Now," *Chelsea Record*, January 7, 2016 (on-line)). We anticipate that these two initiatives, particularly the first, will bring into play the insights and recommendations of the 2002 Chelsea Creek Community Vision Plan, a grassroots process led by the Chelsea Creek Action Group,<sup>1</sup> and we expect that both the visioning process and the municipal harbor plan process will be conducted in a way that attracts significant citizen involvement.
4. CZM should work with the Chelsea Creek Action Group and its affiliates, as well as with Chelsea city officials, to help ensure that – to the greatest extent feasible under 301 CMR § 23.05(e) – the Chelsea DPA incorporates public elements and provides for public shoreline access, particularly as prescribed by a future Municipal Harbor Plan.

In addition, note that, pursuant to 310 CMR § 9.02 (under the definition of "Supporting DPA Use"), certain uses on certain types of parcels occupying up to 25% of a waterfront project area that is subject to a DPA are presumed to be compatible with the DPA designation. Permissible uses include storefront retail, small restaurants, and small offices – provided that they are sited on (among other places) "minor infill parcels" or "other interstitial spaces not likely (in their own right or in combination with other nearby spaces) to be of primary importance in attracting maritime development to the DPA." We believe that such parcels exist and that the list of permissible uses should be understood to include public open space and access to the water.

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<sup>1</sup> Another such plan, the 110-page Chelsea Vision Plan of the 2012 Sasaki Intern Charrette, which was sponsored by Sasaki Associates, a private international interdisciplinary planning and design firm (see [www.chelseama.gov/Public\\_Documents/ChelseaMA\\_Planning/PublicationsFolder/2012%20Sasaki%20Intern%20Chelsea%20Vision%20Plan.pdf](http://www.chelseama.gov/Public_Documents/ChelseaMA_Planning/PublicationsFolder/2012%20Sasaki%20Intern%20Chelsea%20Vision%20Plan.pdf)), quite remarkably does not address public access to Chelsea Creek at all.

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5. CZM should (i) review (and urge the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to review) the public access requirements of Chapter 91 of the Massachusetts General Laws and associated regulations to ensure that maximum public access will be provided along Chelsea Creek under Chapter 91; and (ii) work with Chelsea residents and public officials to support the type of robust and forward-thinking shoreline planning that will create valuable, long-term public assets accessible to all.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft Boundary Review of the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area. We believe that this review, its outcome, and likely impacts have the potential to substantially alter (and improve) the quality of life for Chelsea residents. If you have any questions or require additional information please contact me at (781) 316-3438 or at [EK@mysticriver.org](mailto:EK@mysticriver.org).

Sincerely,



EkOngKar Singh Khalsa,  
Executive Director  
Mystic River Watershed Association

cc: John DePriest, Director of Planning and Development, city of Chelsea  
Stephen N. Sarikas, Ph.D., Chair, Conservation Commission, city of Chelsea  
Roseann Bongiovanni, Associate Executive Director, Chelsea Collaborative  
MyRWA Policy Committee

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