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Testimony on FY '09 Environmental Operating Budget

My name is Steve Pearlman and I am the Advocacy Director for the Neponset River Watershed Association, or NepRWA. I know that today's hearing is on the Fiscal Year 2009 environmental *operating* budget, but I must note that NepRWA is terribly disappointed by the failure of the Patrick Administration to include any significant funding for programs affecting water pollution, water supply, or aquatic habitat restoration in its FY 2008-2012 Five-Year Capital Investment Plan. We are still hoping these programs will be made eligible for funding in the Environmental Bond bill that the Administration submits to the Legislature. Unless this is done, however, significant increases for water programs will be needed in the operating budget just to maintain the current, frankly inadequate, level of effort devoted to water in the Commonwealth today.

Although I cannot speak about the NepRWA membership in general, I know that many of our staff and members of our Board of Directors were strong supporters of Governor Patrick's election last year. Former Governor Romney was disastrous for the environment, cutting overall environmental spending by 17% and reducing DEP staffing by 20% from FY '01 levels (inflation adjusted). We had the highest expectations that the new Governor would reverse this neglect, but based on some of his earliest proposals we are beginning to doubt that assumption.

Governor Patrick and EEA have made global warming their number one environmental priority, and rightly so. However, no matter how bold Massachusetts is in its efforts to control greenhouse emissions, the earth is already inevitably committed to a substantial degree of climate change. While the Administration deserves credit for its initiatives on the prevention (that is, energy) side of the climate change problem, it has yet to put forward any initiatives in the area of ADAPTING to the climate change that will inevitably occur. A great many of these adaptations concern the water infrastructure in the state.

The need for an adaptation to global warming was graphically explained in the EPA-funded "*Climate's Long-term Impacts on Metro Boston*," published on August 13, 2004. The study predicted that sea level rise and increasingly severe rainstorms caused by global warming will flood downtown Boston with waters reaching all the way to Back Bay and Harvard Square, causing major damage not just to buildings and people, but to transportation infrastructure, old and leaking sewer lines submerged in rising floodwaters, wastewater treatment plants, drinking water systems, etc. The study contains detailed suggestions on "How to Adapt," including:

- implementation of both structural and nonstructural coastal flood-management strategies before 2050 to reduce the total costs of flood mitigation and impacts;
- integrating water quality management to include land use, drainage, and waste water treatment.

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Critical in this adaptation process regarding water resources will be issues of:

- potential dam breaches and the resulting release of enormous quantities of toxic sediments trapped behind many dams, including at least two on the Neponset River (note that contaminated sediments are not subject to the 21E cleanup program unless they can be directly tied to a land-side 21E site, which is very difficult to do);
- stormwater recharge and point and non-point source pollution;
- sustainability of existing water supplies, including the problem of salt water intrusion;
- aquatic habitat changes and their effects on commercial and recreational hunting and fishing.

For FY '09, NepRWA supports the funding levels, *adjusted for inflation*, proposed by the Environmental League of Massachusetts in its Green Budget FY2008. This includes in the following accounts:

- \$37 million for DEP Administrative (2200-0100), including a significant increase in funding for water monitoring and assessment, wetlands protection, and watershed protection. Watershed monitoring in particular has been drastically under-funded for years. Twenty percent of our watersheds have not been assessed at all and no watershed has been fully assessed in recent years, as required by the federal Clean Water Act. Funding for FY '08 was \$34.8 million for the entire DEP Administrative account.
- \$610,000 for the DFG Riverways Program (2310-0101), including increased funding for river restoration and dam removal. This account was funded at \$578,000 in FY '08.
- \$1 million for the DFG Natural Heritage & Endangered Species (2310-0301). This account has received no operating funds for the last few years.
- \$3 million for DCR's Stormwater Management (2800-0401). Only \$941,000 was appropriated in FY'08.

In addition, NepRWA supports funding of not less than \$250,000 for the Office of the Secretary of EEA for volunteer water monitoring grants (account 2000-0100). This amount was appropriated in FY 2007, but eliminated in FY 2008. As noted above, DEP has been unable for years to adequately assess the quality of our water in Massachusetts, leaving the task largely to watershed associations and other volunteers. DEP hasn't assessed or monitored the Neponset River Watershed since the 1990s, leaving that task to NepRWA alone.

Finally, if grant money is not included in the Bond Bill for water-related programs, then the DEP operating budget should include at least as much money as has been spent in the past on wetland restoration and watershed improvement projects. Bond funding for watershed implementation projects reached more than \$3 million a year when Robert Durand was Secretary of EOE, and we'd like to see at least that much included in either the Bond bill or the operating budget.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.