

January 23, 2023

Town of Franklin Conservation Commission 355 East Central Street Franklin, Massachusetts 02038

Re: Notice of Intent – Response Letter #1 121 Grove Street Map 295, Lot 1 & Map 294, Lot 7 Franklin , Massachusetts 02038 MassDEP File #159-1261

Members of the Franklin Conservation Commission:

On behalf of Fairfield Residential Company LLC, and in association with RJO'Connell & Associates, Inc., LLC, Lucas Environmental, LLC is pleased to submit this letter in response to the BETA Comment Letter, dated January 6, 2023. This response is submitted as a supplement to the Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) for the subject property located at 121 Grove Street (Map 295, Lot 1 & Map 294, Lot 7) in Franklin, Massachusetts (MassDEP File #159-1261).

The following details the project team's responses to BETA's comments W1 to W9.

- 1. The attached Existing Conditions Site Plan prepared by Guerriere & Halnon, Inc., dated May 20, 2022, and revised through January 19, 2023, was updated to include the following:
 - a. A survey benchmark with a referenced NAVD88 elevation.
 - b. Assessor references for all abutting properties.
 - c. Buffer Zones:
 - i. 25-Foot No Disturb Buffer Zone.
 - ii. 50-Foot No Structure Buffer Zone.
 - iii. 100-Foot Buffer Zone.
 - d. The off-site resource areas that may constrain the site are limited to the New England Power Company parcel, identified as Map 294, Lot 6, to the south of the subject property. These resource areas will be identified and/or approximated on any future permitting plans. The Applicant is amenable to a Special Condition or Fact-of Finding in the Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) to note this.
- 2. BETA stated that they concur that the on-site streams are intermittent, and that Riverfront Area does not exist on the property. No further response required.





- 3. BETA stated that they concur with the delineation of the intermittent streams BF1, BF2, and BF3. No further response required.
- 4. LE disagrees with BETA's contention that six additional groundwater seeps meet the definition of intermittent stream per 310 CMR 10.04 of the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). The WPA defines "Stream" as the following:

A body of running water, including brooks and creeks, which moves in a definite channel in the ground due to a hydraulic gradient, and which flows within, into or out of an Area Subject to Protection under M.G.L. c. 131, § 40.

Unlike BF1, BF2, and BF3, which have defined channels and were flagged by LE as intermittent streams, these additional six areas in question should not be classified as streams as there are no definitive channels present. Due to the rolling topography of the land, a hydraulic gradient is present and water will flow downhill through these areas; however, as a definite channel is lacking, LE would not consider these six additional areas as jurisdictional streams.

- 5. BETA concurs with LE's delineation of the BVW WFB series and recommends extending the delineation from WFB-49 towards the drillhole in the stone wall. The Existing Conditions Site Plan has been updated to reflect this revision.
- 6. BETA concurs that the area within the WFB series (previously identified by LE near flags WFB-72 to WFB-76) are likely too shallow to support breeding habitat of vernal pool indicator species. No further response required.
- BETA concurs with LE's delineation of the BVW WFA series, except for the area south of flags WFA-29 to WFA-31 noted in BETA's letter and discussed further in Comment #8. No further response required; however, LE notes that the area in question was verified between flags WFA-30 & 31 and WFC-5 & 6, not flag WFA-29, per the discussion during the site walk conducted on December 21, 2022 with BETA and the Conservation Agent.
- 8. BETA concurs with LE's delineation of wetland WFC-1 to 3 and WFC-6 to 11; however, has questioned the areas between flags WFA-30 & 31 and WFC-5 & 6. LE respectfully disagrees with BETA's assessment and summary of said area based upon the following points of fact.

LE has inspected this area numerous times on April 20th, April 21st, October 27th, and December 21st, 2022, and January 19th, 2023. LE staff included two Professional and Certified Wetland Scientists (PWS/CWS) and Registered Professional Soil Scientists (RPSS). Mr. Thomas Liddy, PWS, CWS, RPSS, and CESSWI delineated and inspected this area in April and October. I delineated this area with Mr. Liddy in April, and was present for all subsequent inspections. In addition to being an RPSS, I also have a Master's Degree in Soil Science from UMASS – Amherst. LE staff resumes are attached.

Wetlands on-site were delineated in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) publication "Delineating Bordering Vegetated Wetlands" under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (1995) (Delineation Manual).





As the review before this Commission is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act, LE has followed the criteria for identification of wetlands per the state's requirements. As the field is mowed and vegetation is disturbed, LE has conducted a detailed and through assessment of the soils and groundwater in the area in question.

BETA has not demonstrated that this area meets any of the MassDEP criteria required for hydric soils identification (see below). BETA's assessment uses the federal indicators associated with delineations for Waters of the U.S. subject to the Clean Water Act.

LE does not concur with the designation of Hydric Soil Indicator F6 for Redox Dark Surfaces using this methodology. LE disagrees with BETA's conclusion and average soil profile through the area in question. LE has conducted at least two dozen auger holes through this area and notes the following typical profile. LE did observe one hole that generally aligns with BETA's comment; however, this was located approximately two feet upgradient of flag WFA-31.

Depth	Matrix Color	Redox
0-3"	10YR 3/1 and 10YR 3/2	limited to no redox
3-6"	10YR 3/2	variable redox of 1% to 5%
6-12"	10YR 4/4, 10YR 5/4, 10YR 5/6	variable redox
12-R/18"	10YR 4/4, 10YR 5/4, 10YR 5/6	10-20% redox
*R=Refusal at	variable depths of 14-18"	

The MassDEP Delineation Manual states that when evaluating mineral soils for low-chroma colors or other evidence of saturation, <u>look for indicators directly below the A-horizon</u> and within the top 12 inches of the soil surface [emphasis added]. Four soil criteria listed by MassDEP that were analyzed for this site include the following (there are other indicators; however this site did not include any histosols, histic epipedons, sulfidic material or gleyed soils):

- Soils with a matrix chroma of 0 or 1 and values of 4 or higher within 12 inches from the bottom of the O-horizon. The soils observed have a chroma of 1 or 2, and values of 3 and less, therefore the soils would not classify as hydric per this criterion.
- Within 12 inches from the bottom of the O-horizon, soils with a chroma of 2 or less and values of 4 or higher in the matrix, and mottles with a chroma of 3 or higher. The soils observed have a chroma of 1 or 2, and values of 3 and less, OR chroma 4 or higher and values of 4 or higher, and therefore would not classify as hydric per this criterion.
- Within 12 inches from the bottom of the O-horizon, soils with a matrix chroma of 3 and values of 4 or higher, with 10 percent or more low-chroma mottles, as well as indicators of saturation (i.e., mottles, oxidized rhizospheres, concretions, nodules) within 6 inches of the soil surface. The soils observed have a chroma of 1 or 2, and values of 3 and less, therefore the soils would not classify as hydric per this criterion.



• A-horizons that are thick and very dark. A-horizons greater than or equal to 12 inches thick with values less than 3 and chroma of 2 or less are difficult to analyze because indicators of saturation are difficult to see. Therefore, look directly below the A-horizon for a matrix chroma of 1 or less and values of 4 or higher. If the matrix color directly below the thick and dark A-horizon is chroma 2 and value 4 or higher, other indicators of saturation need to be present in the soil directly below the A-horizon. In uncommon situations, it may be necessary to dig deeper to evaluate colors below the A-horizon. The A horizon is not 12 inches thick at this location; however, the principal applies to look directly below the A horizon. The soils observed have a chroma 4 or higher and values of 4 or higher, and therefore would not classify as hydric per this criterion. For comparison, evaluation of the soils within Wetland A and Wetland C show a depleted matrix, or low chromas of 1 and values of 6 with significant redox of approximately 40% directly below the A horizon, which are indicative of hydric soils and influenced by a high groundwater table. This is not present in the area in question.

Furthermore, LE rebuts BETA's opinion that a high groundwater table exists sufficient to create anaerobic conditions within this area. The Delineation Manual states the following in relation to the evaluation of groundwater: some of these hydrologic indicators can be affected by recent heavy rain or seasons with above average amounts of precipitation. Conversely, these indicators may not be present during the entire year or may be absent during prolonged periods of drought.

LE has attached rainfall data for April, October, and December for Franklin, obtained from the National Weather Service (<u>https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=box</u>). LE did not observe groundwater in this area above 18 inches during the October and January site visits. LE evaluated the rainfall data and notes that there was no precipitation in the 11 days prior to the October 27th site visit, and less than a total of one inch the two weeks preceding that site visit.

There was 1.62 inches of rainfall in the two (2) days preceding BETA's site inspection in December, and a total of approximately 2.88 inches of rainfall in the two weeks preceding BETA's site walk. It is expected that water would be at or near the surface following these rain events outside the growing season. Groundwater must be analyzed closely, and if there was a high groundwater table in this area, lower chroma and higher value soils would be observed below the A horizon.

LE included April data to demonstrate that rainfall was close to normal the month the wetlands were delineated. LE was on-site after rain events and considered the rain in assessing groundwater in consideration of the 1.75 inches prior to the initial delineation.

In conclusion of the groundwater discussion, the observation of hydrology by BETA was very likely influenced by the storm events that preceded the December site walk and should not be used as a basis for concluding wetland hydrology exists at this location.

9. BETA noted potential areas of isolated wetland near test pit TP-6; however, the location reviewed in the field during the December site visit with BETA is actually TP-16. Three Professional/Certified Wetland Scientists inspected this area during the April delineation and did not identify sufficient hydrophytic vegetation or hydric soils to delineate this area. Although there is a hydric profile identified in one small area adjacent to the test pit, the vegetation in and surrounding this area is not greater than 50% hydrophytic vegetation.





The vegetation primarily consists of northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) – FACU, eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) – FACU, American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) – FACU, American witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) – FACU, sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) – FACU, black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) – FACU, and princess pine (*Dendrolycopodium obscurum*) – FACU. The overstory consists of red oak and white pine with a few red maple (*Acer rubrum*) – FAC observed. Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) – FACW and sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) – FAC were also observed in a few locations.

LE conducted numerous soils plugs throughout this area, and found the A horizon to be on average, 6-8 inches deep, with soils consisting of a 10YR 5/6 below. Redox was not present or less than 1-2% were observed below 12 inches. Based upon LE's assessment of this area, it does not contain sufficient hydrophytic vegetation or development of hydric soils to be classified as wetland per the MassDEP Delineation Manual or federal criteria.

As one final point, the site has a history of previous wetland delineations that demonstrate Wetland C is isolated. The Draft Existing Conditions Plan, prepared by Alpha Survey Group, dated, January 13, 2022, is attached. The wetlands identified were delineated by LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc. (LEC) in August 2021, with many flags still visible during the recent site inspections. LEC is a reputable firm known for peer review work through the Commonwealth. Their delineation shows a smaller IVW than LE's and no connection to the currently delineated Wetland A. LEC did not identify wetlands in the vicinity of TP-16. This plan is submitted to demonstrate another perspective on these two areas in dispute.

Enclosed please find one (1) original and one (1) copy of the ANRAD supplemental response and fullsize plan, and six (6) copies of the reduced 11x17 plans. A link to an electronic copy of the pdf file of this response will be provided concurrently with this submittal via email.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 617.405.4140 or <u>cml@lucasenviro.com</u>. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely, LUCAS ENVIRONMENTAL, LLC

Christopher M. Lucas, PWS, CWS, RPSS Environmental Consultant/Wetland & Soil Scientist

Enclosures:

- 1. Resumes
- 2. Rainfall Data
- 3. Existing Conditions Site Plan, prepared by Guerriere & Halnon, Inc.
- 4. Existing Conditions Plan, prepared by Alpha Survey Group
- cc: Bryn Smith Owner (electronic copy) Fairfield Residential Company LLC – Applicant (electronic copy) R.J. O'Connell & Associates, Inc. (electronic copy) MassDEP – CERO



Christopher M. Lucas, PWS, CWS, RPSS

Environmental Consultant | Professional Wetland & Soil Scientist Land Development & Permitting

Biography

Christopher Lucas has an extensive background in ecology and wildlife biology as well as marine biology, ornithology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). His responsibilities include preparation and coordination of the environmental science aspects of a variety of project types including railroad and roadways, residential and commercial development, and telecommunications facilities. Chris is skilled in wetland delineations, wildlife habitat evaluations and analysis, and preparation of documents associated with environmental permit applications.

Chris's expertise lies in document preparation and coordination for environmental permitting. He has prepared documentation for federal and state permits under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Regulations. Additionally, Chris has conducted extensive local environmental permitting within New England.

Professional Experience

Municipal Review and Consulting Services

Tasks related to municipal services include on-call peer review of various projects. Oncall services include review of local permitting documents for compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act and Town/City Wetland By-laws, in addition to analysis of environmental impacts. On-call tasks also include review of wetland delineations, wildlife habitat assessments, vernal pool investigations, and rare species work as applicable under the Wetlands Protection Act and Town/City By-laws. Other municipal tasks include work for various Towns to conduct wetland delineations, assist with local permitting and enforcement actions.

Commercial Site Developments – MA

Conducted wetland delineations, wildlife habitat evaluations, and rare species surveys under local, state and federal guidelines for the construction of various commercial developments. Work included consulting and coordination with local, state and federal agencies to obtain all applicable permits required for development. Tasks also integrated wildlife and habitat evaluations for rare species to minimize and mitigate construction impacts.

Residential Site Developments – MA

Prepared and coordinated MEPA, NPDES, USACE, MassDEP, DCR, and local wetland permitting for various residential subdivisions throughout Massachusetts. Site development issues included endangered species work, wetland fill of Outstanding Resource Waters, work within Watershed Protection Areas, impacts to historic properties, and balancing the needs and concerns of local, state, and federal agencies.

Transportation, Railways and Roads - MA

Chris has worked on several roadway and pipeline projects of various lengths (ranging from two miles to over 25 miles) that included wetland delineation and permitting under local, state, and federal regulations. Conducted wetland delineation and wildlife surveys under state and federal guidelines for the reconstruction of the existing railway from Boston to New Bedford/Fall River for an improved commuter rail service.* Work included over 25 miles of wetland delineation involving classification of vernal pools. Tasks also integrated wildlife and habitat evaluations for eighteen rare species with telemetry tracking and monitoring of such species. Duties also involved creation of a database to store and analyze all information collected.

*Some work performed while working for another firm.

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Education

Cornell University Bachelor of Science, Biology (Double Concentration in Marine Biology & Ecology)

Stanford University Master of Science, Biology

UMASS – Amherst Master of Science, Soil Science

Certifications

Professional Wetland Scientist #1884 Society of Wetland Scientists

Certified Wetland Scientist (NH) #274 Joint Board of Licensure and Certification – State of NH

Registered Professional Soil Scientist Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Certificate - San Francisco State University

Professional Affiliations

Society of Wetland Scientists

Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists

Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England



Thomas E. Liddy, PWS, CWS, RPSS, CESSWI

Environmental Consultant | Professional Wetland & Soil Scientist Land Development & Permitting

Biography

Thomas Liddy is a Professional and Certified Wetland Scientist (PWS/CWS) has assisted clients with environmental permit issuance at the federal, state, and local levels since 2001. He routinely conducts wetland delineations and identification of regulated wetland resource areas, as well as natural resource site assessments, including rare species surveys, wildlife habitat assessments, and terrestrial and aquatic vegetative cover type mapping. Tom's project experience ranges from siting and permitting of energy generation facilities and infrastructure, commercial development, lake and pond management and ecological and environmental monitoring. Tom is also experienced as an environmental monitor for erosion control and endangered species, and he performs peer reviews of permit applications for various municipalities. His technical expertise includes wetland delineation, soil profile descriptions, soil evaluations, terrestrial and aquatic vegetation mapping, and rare species survey and habitat assessments.

Tom has knowledge in a variety of ecological disciplines including soil science, wetland ecology, biology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and watershed hydrology. He is experienced in regulatory disciplines, specifically the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA), Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), Section 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Division of Land Use Regulation Permitting, and New York State Article 7 Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for Electric and Gas Transmission Facilities.

Professional Experience

Wetland Delineation and Permitting

Tom has routinely worked on projects that included wetland delineation and permitting under local, state, and federal regulations for commercial, residential, and industrial projects. Site development issues have included endangered species work, wetland fill and mitigation plans, work within Watershed Protection Areas, impacts to historic properties, and balancing the needs and concerns of local, state, and federal agencies.

Energy Generation and Permitting - locations throughout New England

Tom has led technical writing and permit application preparation associated with the siting and construction of energy generation facilities (fossil fuel combustion, wind generation, solar and gas storage) and linear transmission (pipelines and electrical transmission interconnections) for projects throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic states.

Ecological Monitoring and Research

Tom has conducted and participated in numerous biological surveys, studies, and long term studies of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Studies were associated with avian studies in support of wind turbine projects and of long term trends of vegetation, hydrology, water levels, and rare species in a variety of ecosystems ranging from rare Atlantic white cedar swamps to upland forests to lakes and ponds.

Peer Review – Massachusetts

Tom has assisted municipalities with review of Notice of Intent (NOI) and Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) applications for compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act. Tasks often include review of resource area identification and delineation and intermittent vs. perennial stream determinations. Municipalities include Scituate, Southborough, Spencer, Marlborough, Milton, Hanover, Andover, Wellesley, Wrentham, Hopkinton, and Brookline, Massachusetts.



Education

University of Rhode Island, Bachelor of Science, Environmental Science and Management, 2001

Certifications

Professional Wetland Scientist #1723 Society of Wetland Scientists

Certified Wetland Scientist (NH) #243 Joint Board of Licensure and Certification – State of NH

Registered Professional Soil Scientist Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England

Certified Erosion, Sediment and Stormwater Inspection #5855

Professional Affiliations

Society of Wetland Scientists

Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists

Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England

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Climatological Data for FRANKLIN, MA - April 2022			
Date	Precipitation	New Snow	Snow Depth
2022-04-01	0.14	0.0	0
2022-04-02	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-03	0.07	0.0	0
2022-04-04	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-05	0.06	0.0	0
2022-04-06	0.23	0.0	0
2022-04-07	0.66	0.0	0
2022-04-08	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-09	0.03	0.0	0
2022-04-10	0.25	0.0	0
2022-04-11	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-12	0.02	0.0	0
2022-04-13	0.04	0.0	0
2022-04-14	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-15	0.23	0.0	0
2022-04-16	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-17	0.27	0.0	0
2022-04-18	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-19	1.62	0.0	0
2022-04-20	0.13	0.0	0
2022-04-21	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-22	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-23	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-24	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-25	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-26	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-27	0.15	0.0	0
2022-04-28	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-29	0.00	0.0	0
2022-04-30	0.00	0.0	0
Sum	3.90	0.0	-
Average	-	-	0.0
Normal	4.51	1.2	-

Observations for each day cover the 24 hours ending at the time given below (Local Standard Time).	
Precipitation : 7am	
Snowfall : unknown	
Snow Depth : 7am	

Climatological Data for FRANKLIN, MA - November 2022			
Date	Precipitation	New Snow	Snow Depth
2022-11-01	0.10	0.0	0
2022-11-02	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-03	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-04	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-05	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-06	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-07	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-08	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-09	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-10	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-11	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-12	0.57	0.0	0
2022-11-13	0.05	0.0	0
2022-11-14	0.12	0.0	0
2022-11-15	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-16	0.70	0.0	0
2022-11-17	0.15	0.0	0
2022-11-18	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-19	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-20	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-21	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-22	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-23	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-24	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-25	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-26	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-27	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-28	0.77	0.0	0
2022-11-29	0.00	0.0	0
2022-11-30	0.00	0.0	0
Sum	2.46	0.0	-
Average	-	-	0.0
Normal	4.08	1.4	-

Observations for each day cover the 24 hours endi at the time given below (Local Standard Time).	ng
Precipitation : 7am	
Snowfall : unknown	
Snow Depth : 7am	

Climatological Data for FRANKLIN, MA - December 2022			
Date	Precipitation	New Snow	Snow Depth
2022-12-01	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-02	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-03	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-04	0.29	0.0	0
2022-12-05	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-06	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-07	0.45	0.0	0
2022-12-08	0.52	0.0	0
2022-12-09	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-10	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-11	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-12	0.10	М	М
2022-12-13	0.00	0.0	М
2022-12-14	0.00	0.0	М
2022-12-15	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-16	0.44	М	М
2022-12-17	1.18	М	М
2022-12-18	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-19	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-20	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-21	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-22	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-23	1.63	0.0	0
2022-12-24	0.53	0.0	0
2022-12-25	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-26	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-27	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-28	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-29	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-30	0.00	0.0	0
2022-12-31	0.00	0.0	0
Sum	5.14	0.0	-
Average	-		0.0
Normal	4.92	8.9	-

Observations for each day cover the 24 hours ending
at the time given below (Local Standard Time).

Precipitation : 7am Snowfall : 7am

Snow Depth : 7am



