

Blue Hills Fact Sheet

MWRA BLUE HILLS RESERVOIR PROJECT

- Proposed project will result in the draining of a 8.7 acres waterbody in the Blue Hills Reservation, and filling with tanks and backfill
- The MWRA will construct two concrete tanks 40 feet high and 240 feet in diameter, each holding 10 million gallons of water (mound of fill over tanks will be covered w/dirt and sod)
- largest construction project in Blue Hills Reservation in 50 yrs
- proposed project will cost approximately \$30 million
- the water tanks will provide emergency water for *one day* to 100,000 water customers, mostly in Quincy
- none of the wetlands are proposed to be replaced, contrary to state and federal policies
- this project will be the first Wetlands Act variance since at least 1990 requiring no replacement of lost wetlands, and the largest net wetland loss statewide since at least 1990

BLUE HILLS RESERVATION

- largest component of Boston's century old metropolitan park system created in 1894; intended to preserve natural scenery for the use and enjoyment of public
- Road adjacent to the Reservoir, Chickatawbut Road, was laid out 1890's as park road by landscape architect Charles Eliot and recently added to National Register of Historic Sites
- reservoir site was protected parkland/wetlands for 50 yrs before reservoir built 1950

BACKGROUND ON BLUE HILLS RESERVOIR

- constructed 1950 by MDC via damming of Twinbrook Swamp in Blue Hills Reservation near Quincy/Milton line
- The reservoir is currently 16.4 acres, up to 38 feet deep. Capacity 100 million gallons
- taken off-line in 1981 and not used since
- largest body of clean open water remaining in Quincy
- remarkably clear, with visibility exceeding 25 feet
- entirely surrounded by wooded parkland preserved since 1896. The reservoir supports five species game fish (bass, sunfish, perch, pickerel, crappie)
- 40 species native wetland plants, and is surrounded by upland rare species habitat

HISTORY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT SITE

1999: late MDC South Region Parks Supervisor Brian Broderick calls project "too disruptive" and asks MWRA to choose another site

2001: Friends of Blue Hills asks that if use of site is unavoidable, MWRA at least comply with no-net-loss and add to Reservation resources comparable to those that will be lost

2003: Dept. of Environmental Protection grants MWRA Wetlands Act variance allowing filling of 8.7 acres protected wetlands w/out replacement. Friends of Blue Hills appeals variance

2005: Quincy and Milton Conservation Commissions write DEP asking that wetlands be replaced

2005: Six local legislators (Sen. Joyce, Reps. Ayers, Creedon, Mariano, Galvin, and Timilty) write DEP Commissioner Golledge asking that no-net-loss be complied with and wetlands replaced

August, 2005: Administrative law judge Mark Silverstein issues decision finding Reservoir variance violates MA Wetlands Protection Act and no-net-loss policy. Requires that wetlands be replaced

September, 2005: DEP Commissioner Golledge overturns judge's decision and approves project as is; Friends of Blue Hills file Motion for Reconsideration

October, 2005: MWRA begins draining Reservoir; Quincy mayor William Phelan writes to MWRA head Fred Laskey requesting that the agency replace lost wetlands if and when it fills 8.7 acres of the Blue Hills Reservoir, stating that the tank project "will drastically affect the enjoyment of the [Blue Hills] reservation by Quincy residents and there should be recognition of that through mitigation in other parts of the city."