

May 22, 2006

RE: HOUSE BILL 4914, A PETITION OF BRUCE AYERS AND ROBERT COUGHLIN, AN ACT TO PROTECT CERTAIN WETLANDS IN THE BLUE HILLS RESERVATION

What the bill does:

--requires the Metropolitan Water Resources Authority (MWRA) not to proceed further with construction of two concrete water tanks 43 feet high and 240 feet in diameter in protected wetlands in the Blue Hills Reservation in Quincy unless and until MWRA proposes to replace the 8.7 acres of wetlands that will be lost, and the Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) determines that the replacement is timely and in-kind

Why the bill is necessary:

--the permit, or variance, granted to MWRA by Commissioner Robert Golledge of DEP in September, 2005 explicitly disavows the commonwealth's long-standing no net loss of wetlands policy and approves the largest net loss of wetlands permitted anywhere in Massachusetts since at least 1990 as part of the largest construction project in the Blue Hills in fifty years

--the Blue Hills Reservation is an invaluable and historic public resource that will be permanently harmed by introduction of a new mitigation standard that allows the Commissioner to approve wholesale wetland filling by public agencies without replacement

Who supports the bill:

--prior to the issuance of the variance, four of the five legislators representing districts including portions of the Blue Hills wrote to DEP and/or MWRA asking that the tank project be modified so as to avoid a major net loss of wetlands in the Reservation. Similar pleas were sent by the Milton and Quincy Conservation Commissions, the mayor of Quincy, several other legislators, sixteen statewide environmental organizations, and many local residents and members of the Friends of the Blue Hills. All were disregarded

more information at: www.friendsofthebluehills.org/BHreservoir.htm