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Don Henley
Founder and President

Kathi Anderson
Executive Director

February 14, 2023

Mr. Alexander Strysky
MEPA Office
100 Cambridge St., Suite 900
Boston, MA 02113

Dear Mr. Strysky:

“RE: EEA #16654: L.G. Hanscom Field North Airfield Development ENF”

As the Executive Director of The Walden Woods Project, I submit the following comments relative to the above-referenced project.

The Walden Woods Project (WWP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is headquartered in Lincoln, MA, a half mile from Walden Pond. Founded in 1990, The WWP preserves the land, literature and legacy of Henry David Thoreau to foster an ethic of environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Since its inception, The WWP has received extensive federal, state and private sector funding to further our vital mission. To date, we have preserved nearly 200 acres of land in Walden Woods (Concord and Lincoln) for public enjoyment and education. We offer outdoor education programs for a highly diverse population of teachers, students and the general public. These programs connect Thoreau’s philosophy to address contemporary environmental (e.g., climate change) and social reform (e.g., human rights) challenges.

Walden Pond and the historic woods that surround it were declared one of America’s most threatened National Historic Landmarks by the National Park Service, and were twice listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America’s Most Endangered Historic Places due to increasing pressures and impacts of regional development.

Our organization joins with dozens of other nonprofit groups, town governments, state agencies, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others in working to ensure that the rich ecological and historical assets that abound in the Hanscom-area communities are protected for future generations.

The WWP is deeply concerned by:

- (a) the proposal to double the amount of hangar space and build other infrastructure to support increased aircraft operations at Hanscom Field ;
- (b) the lack of specific data and details concerning environmental impacts of this proposal; and
- (c) the inadequate amount of time afforded stakeholders to comment on a proposal of this magnitude.

Of particular concern to our organization are the following issues:

1. At a time when our local, regional, statewide, national and international efforts are laser focused on addressing the existential threat of climate change, we must redouble our efforts to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. However, this project seeks to expand the infrastructure (increasing hangar space; upgrading taxiway and runway capacity, constructing a "fuel farm") that will increase private, corporate and/or commercial jet aviation, a major contributor to the climate change crisis. Furthermore, it requires the clearing of some 34 acres of woodland – extensive tree cutting -- with the resulting negative impacts to carbon sequestration.
2. Noise disruption from Hanscom has, for many years, caused a severe, detrimental impact to the outdoor environment in the surrounding communities, specifically at Walden Pond/Walden Woods. The trajectory from runways 5/23 and 11/29 take low flying aircraft directly over our organization's headquarters and over Walden Pond. The Hanscom runways are only 2 miles from Walden Pond. The WWP's educational presentations for school groups, held at our campus and at Walden Pond, are frequently interrupted by jet aircraft noise. The Hanscom expansion proposal will likely worsen existing noise pollution, as well as increase air quality impacts.
3. An abundance of natural resources (wildlife, woodlands, meadows, ponds, rivers) are found in the Hanscom area communities. These include those within Minute Man National Historical Park, Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the SuAsCo Wild and Scenic River system, Walden Pond State Reservation, as well as hundreds of acres of public and private conservation land. The Hanscom expansion project must be fully evaluated to determine how these natural resources will be impacted.

The Walden Woods Project strongly opposes the Hanscom expansion proposal. We believe that this project will generate profound and permanent detrimental impacts to the ecological, historic and natural environment of the Hanscom area communities, and to the people who reside in this nationally-significant region.

Sincerely,



Kathleen R. Anderson, Executive Director