UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION I

5 POST OFFICE SQUARE SUITE 100

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02109-3912

May 14, 2020

Laura Blake, Director
Watershed Planning Program
Department of Environmental Protection
8 New Bond Street
Worcester, MA 01606

Dear Ms. Blake,

Thank you for submitting the "Mystic River Watershed Alternative TMDL Development for Phosphorus Management-Final Report" (Report) to the EPA for the record as a final study, and for acceptance as an alternative restoration plan for the Mystic River. EPA Region 1 water quality, stormwater, and urban waters program staff have worked closely with MassDEP to ensure this study adequately considers point and nonpoint sources of pollution to the watershed and the reductions necessary to meet Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards (MASWQS) and restore the currently impaired Aquatic Life and Recreation Designated Uses in the study area. EPA thanks MassDEP for their partnership in this effort.

While the Report is not a traditional TMDL in the regulatory context, it includes many of the same elements, including water quality data, identification of the sources of phosphorus causing the impairments, and a modeling analysis to identify phosphorus load reductions necessary to meet MASWQS. This Report and associated studies were reviewed by a technical steering committee and a contracted independent reviewer. The Report represents the most comprehensive and complete assessment of the nutrient-related impairments in the Mystic River currently available and supports an adaptive management process for the Mystic River watershed focused on the reduction of phosphorus loads. As such, this Report may be considered best-available science and used to inform future regulatory activities (e.g., NPDES permitting).

Consistent with the EPA memorandum from Benita Best-Wong, dated August 13, 2015, with the subject line, "Information Concerning 2016 Clean Water Act Sections 303(d), 305(b) and 314 Integrated Reporting and Listing Decisions" and the EPA TMDL Vision framework ("the Vision")[1], the Report is intended to inform and guide pollutant load reduction implementation by

[1]U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. December 2013. "A Long-Term Vision for Assessment, Restoration, and Protection under the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Program. " Access: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/vision_303d_program_dec_2013.pdf

municipalities and others in the watershed. TMDL Vision program components particularly emphasized in this effort include Engagement, Prioritization, and Alternatives. The submitted Alternative TMDL Report considered the relevant elements of these memoranda and we accept the Alternative TMDL to be counted towards WQ-27, which is a performance measure used to track the progress in implementing the CWA 303(d) Program Vision, for FY2020.

While the alternative restoration approach is being implemented, the impaired water segments listed in the submittal letter dated May 13, 2020 should remain in Category 5 on future Section 303(d) lists until follow-up monitoring demonstrates that water quality standards have been achieved, as indicated in your letter. If ecosystem improvements are not detected through future monitoring, EPA reserves the right to require the development of a traditional TMDL. It is EPA's understanding that there is a monitoring network already in place that is sufficient to measure the progress of restoration in the Mystic River watershed, as outlined in MassDEP's May 13 letter to EPA.

As a complement to the Report, EPA, MassDEP, and the Mystic River Watershed Association have been working with contractors to provide targeted technical assistance to six communities in the watershed to support implementation of affordable stormwater retrofits on municipal property as well as review of local bylaws related to development and redevelopment of impervious surfaces in the watershed. Lessons learned from this effort will be shared with other watershed municipalities and stakeholders to assist with implementation of the Alternative TMDL. EPA encourages continued collaboration among project partners and Mystic River communities and is committed to ongoing engagement on regional stormwater management issues. Thank you again for submitting the Report and please let us know if you have any questions or comments.

/s/

Ralph Abele, Chief
Water Quality Standards Section

Data for entry in EPA's National TMDL Tracking System								
TMDL Name *			**Mystic River Watershed Alternative TMDL Development for Phosphorus Management - Final Report**					
Number of TMDLs*			7 TMDL Alternatives (Alternative Restoration Approaches)					
Type of TMDLs*			Nutrients (phosphorous)					
Number of listed causes/parameters (from 303(d) list)			20					
Lead State			Massachusetts (MA)					
TMDL Status			Final					
Individual TMDLs listed below								
Action ID#	TMDL Segment name	TMDL Segment ID #	TMDL Pollutant ID# & name	TMDL Impairment PARAMETERS/Cause (s), ID# and name	Pollutant endpoint	Unlisted?	MA DEP Point Source & ID#	Listed for anything else?
R1_MA_2020_5a	Aberjona River	MA71_01	Phosphorus, Total	Phosphorus, Total Dissolved Oxygen	30 ug/L	N		Physical substrate habitat alterations Ammonia, Un_ionized Arsenic Benthic Macroinvertebrates Bioassessments Escherichia Coli (E. Coli Sediment Bioassay
R1_MA_2020_5a	Alewife Brook	MA71_04	Phosphorus, Total	Dissolved Oxygen Flocculant Masses Phosphorus, Total Secchi Disk Transparency	30 ug/L	N		Debris Trash Copper Escherichia Coli (E. Coli Lead Odor Oil And Grease PCBs In Fish Tissue Scum/Foam Sediment Bioassay
R1_MA_2020_5a	Lower Mystic Lake	MA71027	Phosphorus, Total	Dissolved Oxygen	30 ug/L	N		DDT in Fish Tissue Hydrogen Sulfide PCBs In Fish Tissue Salinity Sediment Bioassay

R1_MA_2020_5a	Malden River	MA71_05	Phosphorus, Total	Dissolved Oxygen Dissolved Oxygen - Supersaturation Flocculant Masses Phosphorus, Total Secchi Disk Transparency	30 ug/L	N		Debris Trash Chlordane in Fish Tissue DDT in Fish Tissue Escherichia Coli (E. Coli) Fecal Coliform Odor Oil And Grease PCBs In Fish Tissue pH, High Scum/Foam Sediment Bioassay Total Suspended Solids (TSS)
R1_MA_2020_5a	Mystic River	MA71_02	Phosphorus, Total	Chlorophyll_a Dissolved Oxygen Supersaturation Phosphorus, Total Secchi Disk Transparency	30 ug/L	N		Fish Passage Barrier Non_Native Aquatic Plants Arsenic Chlordane in Fish Tissue DDT in Fish Tissue Escherichia Coli (E. Coli) PCBs In Fish Tissue Sediment Bioassay
R1_MA_2020_5a	Mystic River	MA71_03	Phosphorus, Total	Dissolved Oxygen Flocculant Masses	30 ug/L	N		Ammonia, Unionized Cause Unknown Sediment Screening Value (Exceedence) Fecal Coliform Odor Oil And Grease PCBs In Fish Tissue Petroleum Hydrocarbons) Scum/Foam)
R1_MA_2020_5a	Upper Mystic lake	MA71043	Phosphorus, Total	Dissolved Oxygen Dissolved Oxygen - Supersaturation	30 ug/L	N		Non_Native Aquatic Plants Enterococcus
TMDL Type			Nonpoint Sources					

Establishment Date (approval)*	May 14, 2020
Completion (final submission) Date	May 13, 2020
Public Notice Date	N/A
EPA Developed	No
Towns affected* (in alphabetical order)	Arlington, Belmont, Boston (Charlestown & East Boston), Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester Winthrop, Woburn