

News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-2771 TDD/(401) 222-4462

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Contact: Rayna Maguire 222-4700 ext. 2409

DEM ISSUES WETLANDS PERMIT FOR T.F. GREEN STATE AIRPORT

PROVIDENCE -- The Department of Environmental Management has issued a Permit to Alter Freshwater Wetlands to the RI Airport Corporation (RIAC) for a runway safety improvement project at T.F. Green State Airport in Warwick. The permit, which also serves as a Water Quality Certification by the state under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and pursuant to RI Water Quality regulations, goes into effect on April 16, 2014 and expires on July 1, 2016.

The permit is specifically for site alternations related to the proposed reconstruction of a portion of Runway 34 and Taxiway C at its terminus for FAA-mandated runway safety area improvements at TF Green. According to the permit application, the current safety areas are well below current standards for its designated length. The project includes the installation of an engineered material arresting system (EMAS), relocation of the vehicle service road, new drainage and other associated improvements and/or modifications to airport operations such as lighting and navigational systems.

Due to the presence of a swamp and a river at the foot of the slope of Runway 34, the extension of the runway safety area would result in unavoidable alterations and impacts to these wetland resources. RIAC, in consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and DEM, explored a number of mitigation options. Throughout the permitting process, RIAC continuously sought to both reduce alterations and impacts, and to provide mitigation options aimed at replacing or enhancing unavoidable impacts to wetland functions and values.

The permit addresses impacts from stormwater discharges from the airport facility, and includes the elimination or relocation of stormwater outfalls currently permitted by RIAC's RI Pollution Discharge Elimination System (RIPDES) permit. RIAC must submit an amended application to DEM within 30 days that includes modifications to the RIPDES site-wide Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and drainage master plan. Also included in the permit are restrictions for time of construction at one of the major mitigation sites, in order to avoid, to the extent possible, interference with the migration of river herring.

"Issuance of the permit represents a major milestone in our airport capital improvement program and will allow RIAC to move forward with necessary safety improvements for airline passengers in a manner that is protective of the environment" said RIAC President/CEO Kelly Fredericks. It is anticipated that the project, as approved and with the conditions set forth in the permit, will result in an overall improvement in the water quality of Buckeye Brook as well as in the quality

of wildlife habitat and anadromous fisheries of the Buckeye Brook riparian system.

Replacement of culverts under Lake Shore Drive, and improvements to the river channel north of the culverts will result in multiple benefits, including improvements to access for migrating river herring, slight improvements to flooding, and increased connectivity between currently fragmented areas of riparian wetland. Compliance with the requirements of the RI Stormwater Design & Installation Standards Manual will result in treatment of stormwater runoff from paved runway areas that currently receive no water quality treatment.

As part of the permit review process, DEM issued a public Notice that included a public comment period. The process provided an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed project and its effects on freshwater wetlands and for DEM to consider those comments prior to issuance of the final permit. DEM received a number of comments from the public regarding the project, and worked hard to ensure that all relevant concerns were covered by the Department's evaluation and were addressed by RIAC.

"After a thorough and careful process, I am pleased to see the permit for this important runway safety project move forward," said DEM Director Janet Coit.