



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
New England District
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

PUBLIC NOTICE

Comment Period Begins: July 19, 2011
Comment Period Ends: August 17, 2011
File Number: NAE-2010-1326
In Reply Refer To: Kevin R. Kotelly, P.E.
Phone: (978) 318-8703
E-mail: kevin.r.kotelly@usace.army.mil

The District Engineer has received a permit application from the applicant below to conduct work in waters of the United States as described below.

APPLICANT

Western Massachusetts Electric Company

PROPOSED WORK AND PURPOSE

The work includes the discharge of dredged or fill material within waters of the United States (US) including wetlands in order to perform the Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECO) 354 Line Reconstruction Project over a beaver impoundment called Beaver Pond on the town line of Leverett and Montague, Massachusetts. The project proposes to remove eight wooden electric transmission structures and replace them with four steel structures. The replacement structures will all require poured concrete foundations, each approximately 10 feet in diameter. A total of 10 foundations will be required to support the new structures. 7 of the foundations are proposed within regulated wetlands. Each concrete foundation will result in approximately 80 square feet (SF) of permanent fill.

WMECO will require installation of timber mats for the construction of temporary access roads and work platforms to support construction of the new transmission structures and removal of the existing structures. The temporary access roads will be 16 feet wide to safely allow construction equipment to reach the work platforms. The access roads will be continuous through the work area. The work platforms will vary in size from 50 by 50 feet, located at the existing wooden structures, to 400 by 150 feet, located at either end of the work zone to allow for pulling electrical wires onto the new structures. Temporary access roads and work platforms will be constructed of timber mats laid in series.

The depth of Beaver Pond has varied over the last several years, but has increased in depth over the last few years due to increased beaver damming activity. Beaver Pond has recently been dewatered by approximately two feet by WMECO with the installation of a pond leveller at one end of the pond. The current water depth in the pond varies between two and six feet at different locations in the pond and is a workable depth for WMECO to construct and maintain the proposed electrical transmission structures.

CENAE-R
FILE NO. NAE-2010-1326

The proposed project will result in permanent, temporary, and secondary impacts to waters of the United States including wetlands. The proposed impacts are summarized below:

- Permanent Impacts = 560 square feet due to the installation of seven new electric transmission structures.
- Temporary Impacts = 4.68 acres due to the placement of timber mats for project access and temporary work platforms to provide safe areas for electrical crews to perform the construction activities.
- Secondary Impacts = 1.74 acres due to clearing and conversion of forested wetland to scrub-shrub wetland.

The project will allow WMECO to eliminate public safety concerns and maintain the electrical power service along the high voltage 354 kV power line that runs through ten western Massachusetts towns. The integrity of the existing structures has been significantly compromised and no longer meets WMECO's operational and safety standards.

The work is described on the enclosed plans entitled, "354 Reconstruction Project," on two sheets, and dated, March, 2011, and entitled, "Proposed New Structure #2," on two sheets, and dated, March, 2011.

MITIGATION

Avoidance: The proposed project is a pole replacement project along an existing electric transmission right-of-way (ROW). The existing ROW passes through a beaver pond and associated wetlands. It is not possible to either redirect the existing ROW around, or erect structures to span, the water resources. Therefore, impacts to waters of the US are unavoidable.

Minimization: The project proposes to remove eight wooden electric transmission structures and replace them with four steel structures. By reducing the number of structures within the project area by half, the impacts of the transmission structures through waters of the US will be minimized by over 200 SF.

Compensation: As compensation for unavoidable losses to waters of the US, WMECO is proposing off-site mitigation within the Town of Amherst, Massachusetts. On-site mitigation was investigated by WMECO, but no suitable mitigation was identified given the limited areas available on-site. No other suitable mitigation sites were identified within the same watershed as the proposed project. As a result, mitigation areas outside the watershed of the proposed project were investigated.

WMECO will be developing a detailed mitigation plan that depicts proposed improvements to the Owen's Pond portion of the Wentworth Farm Conservation Area, an approximately 68 acre property managed by the Amherst Conservation Commission. The mitigation plan for Owen's Pond will be reviewed and approved by the Corps prior to the issuance of a permit.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED WORK

This work is proposed in the Beaver Pond Impoundment off Richardson Road in Montague/Leverett, Massachusetts. The proposed location on the USGS Williamsburg quadrangle sheet is at Latitude 42°31'4" and Longitude 72°28'20".

AUTHORITY

Permits are required pursuant to:

- Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899
- Section 404 of the Clean Water Act
- Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act).

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which may reasonably accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are: conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural value, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain value, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food production and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Where the activity involves the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, the evaluation of the impact of the activity in the public interest will also include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, U.S Environmental Protection Agency, under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-267), requires all federal agencies to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service on all actions, or proposed actions, permitted, funded, or undertaken by the agency, that may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).

This project will impact approximately 8 acres of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Atlantic salmon and anadromous fish species. This habitat consists of meandering inland streams. Williams Brook and the Sawmill River in Leverett and Montague as well as the Fort River in Amherst are coldwater fishery resources and provide suitable habitat for Atlantic salmon and other anadromous species. Loss of this habitat may adversely affect the species listed above. However, the District Engineer has made a preliminary determination that the site-specific adverse effect will not be substantial. Further consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding EFH conservation recommendations is being conducted and will be concluded prior to the final decision.

SECTION 106 COORDINATION

Based on his initial review, the District Engineer has determined that the proposed work may impact properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. Additional review and consultation to fulfill requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, will be ongoing as part of the permit review process.

ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSULTATION

The New England District, Army Corps of Engineers has reviewed the list of species protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, which might occur at the project sites. It is our preliminary determination that the proposed activity for which authorization is being sought is designed, situated or will be operated/used in such a manner that it is not likely to adversely affect any Federally listed endangered or threatened species or their designated critical habitat. By this Public Notice, we are requesting that the appropriate Federal Agency concur with our determination.

The following authorizations have been applied for, or have been, or will be obtained:

- Permit, License or Assent from State.
- Permit from Local Wetland Agency or Conservation Commission.
- Water Quality Certification in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

In order to properly evaluate the proposal, we are seeking public comment. Anyone wishing to comment is encouraged to do so. **Comments should be submitted in writing by the above date.** If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Kotelly at (978) 318-8703, (800) 343-4789 or (800) 362-4367, if calling from within Massachusetts.

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider the application. Requests for a public hearing shall specifically state the reasons for holding a public hearing. The Corps holds public hearings for the purpose of obtaining public comments when that is the best means for understanding a wide variety of concerns from a diverse segment of the public.

The initial determinations made herein will be reviewed in light of facts submitted in response to this notice. All comments will be considered a matter of public record. Copies of letters of objection will be forwarded to the applicant who will normally be requested to contact objectors directly in an effort to reach an understanding.

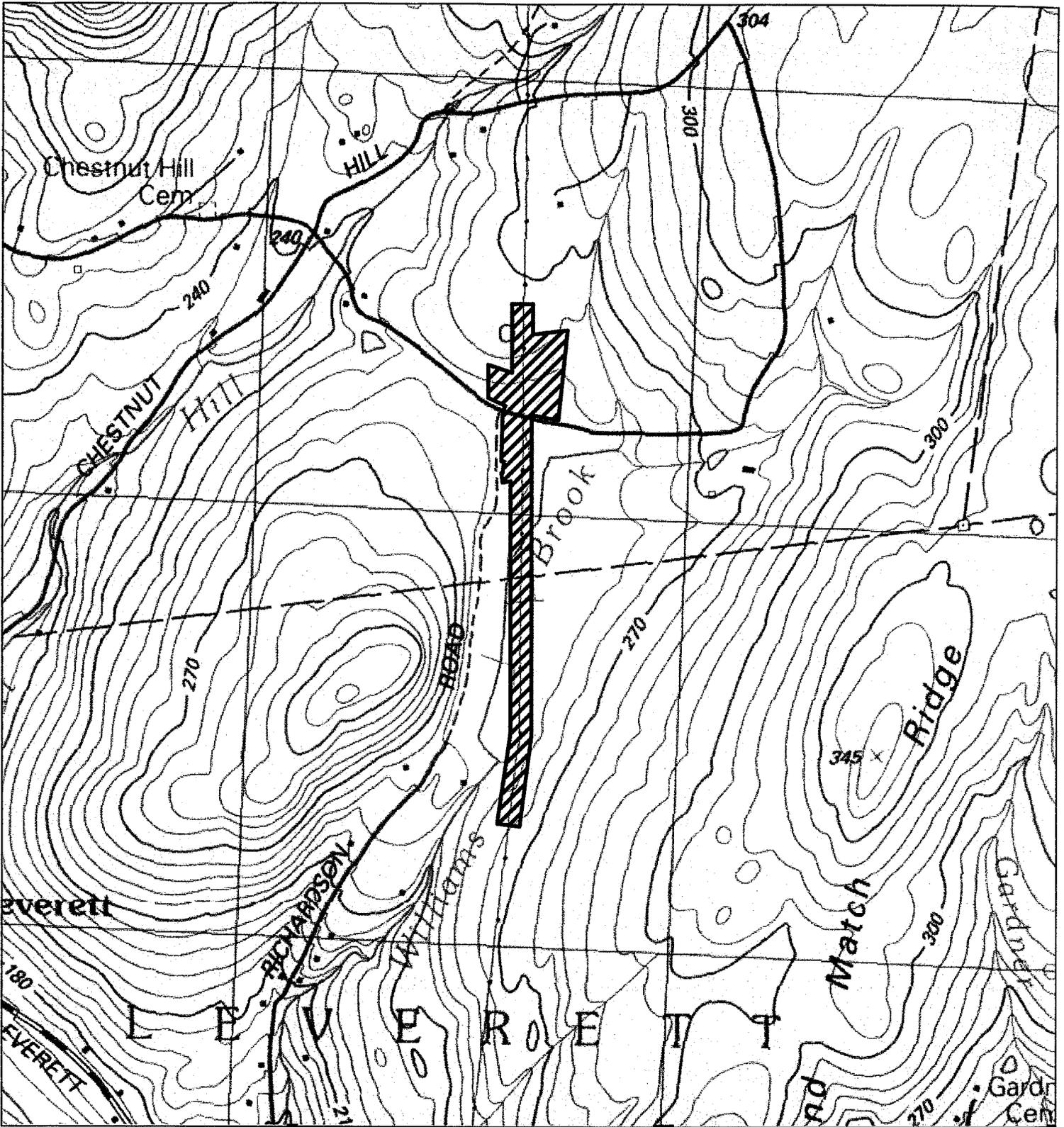
THIS NOTICE IS NOT AN AUTHORIZATION TO DO ANY WORK.



Karen K. Adams
Chief, Permits and Enforcement Branch
Regulatory Division

If you would prefer not to continue receiving Public Notices, please contact Ms. Tina Chaisson at (978) 318-8058 or e-mail her at bettina.m.chaisson@usace.army.mil. You may also check here and return this portion of the Public Notice to: Bettina Chaisson, Regulatory Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____



Source: USGS 2001

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

WMECO 354 Line
Reconstruction Project

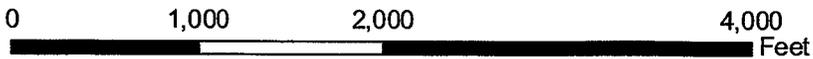
Locus Map
Figure 1

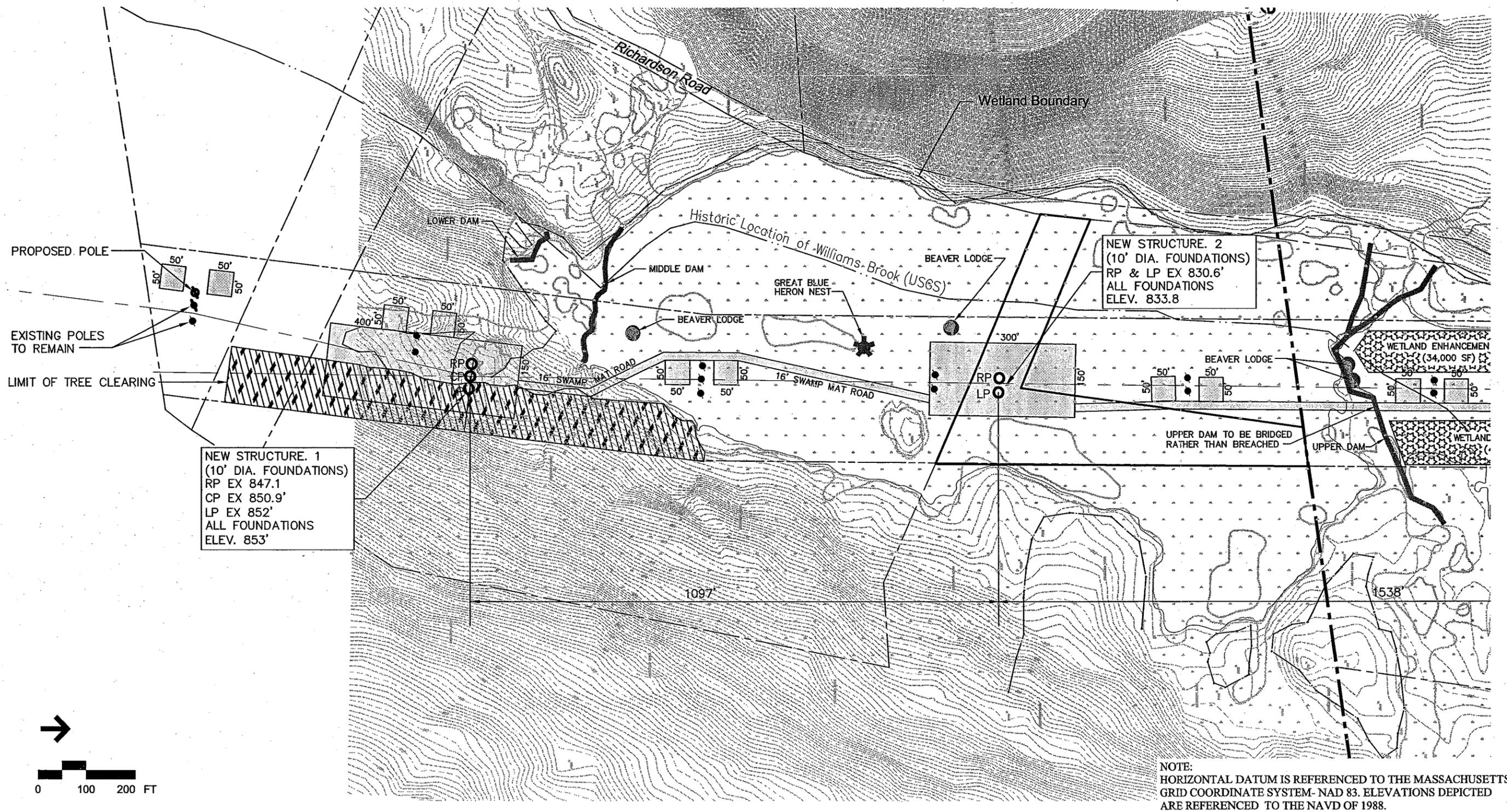
Richardson Road Beaver Impoundment

March 2011

Montague and Leverett,
Massachusetts

— Site





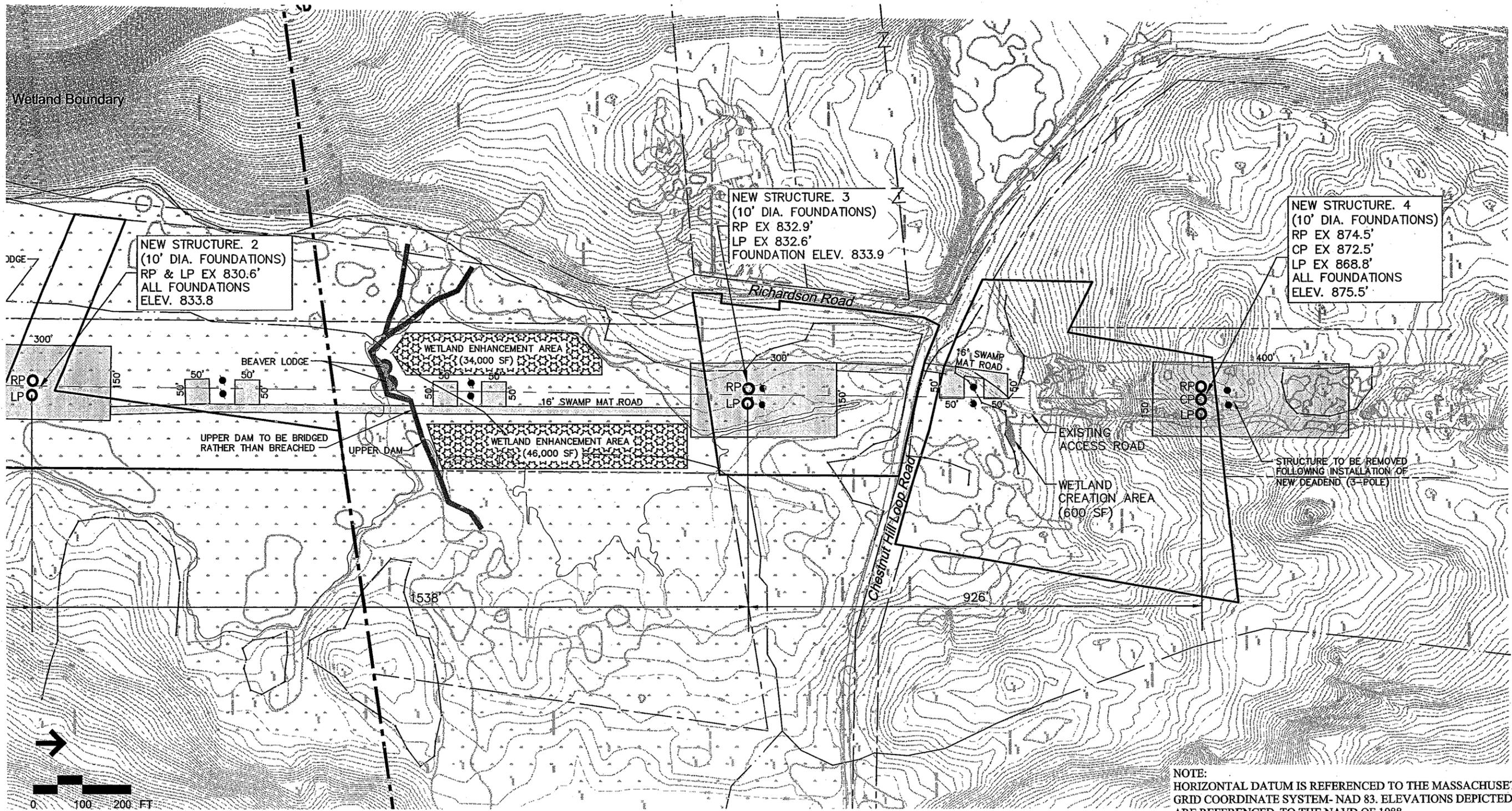
VHB
 Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
 Transportation
 Land Development
 Environmental Services
 101 Walnut Street, P.O. Box 9151
 Watertown, MA 02471
 617 924-1770 - FAX 617 924-2286

Figure Ev-1
 AT: Richardson Road
 IN: Montague / Leverett
 Franklin County
 Commonwealth of Massachusetts

354 RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

APPLICATION BY:
 Western Massachusetts Electric Company
 c/o Northeast Utilities Service Company

DATE
 March, 2011
 SHEET 1 OF 2



NOTE:
HORIZONTAL DATUM IS REFERENCED TO THE MASSACHUSETTS
GRID COORDINATE SYSTEM- NAD 83. ELEVATIONS DEPICTED
ARE REFERENCED TO THE NAVD OF 1988.

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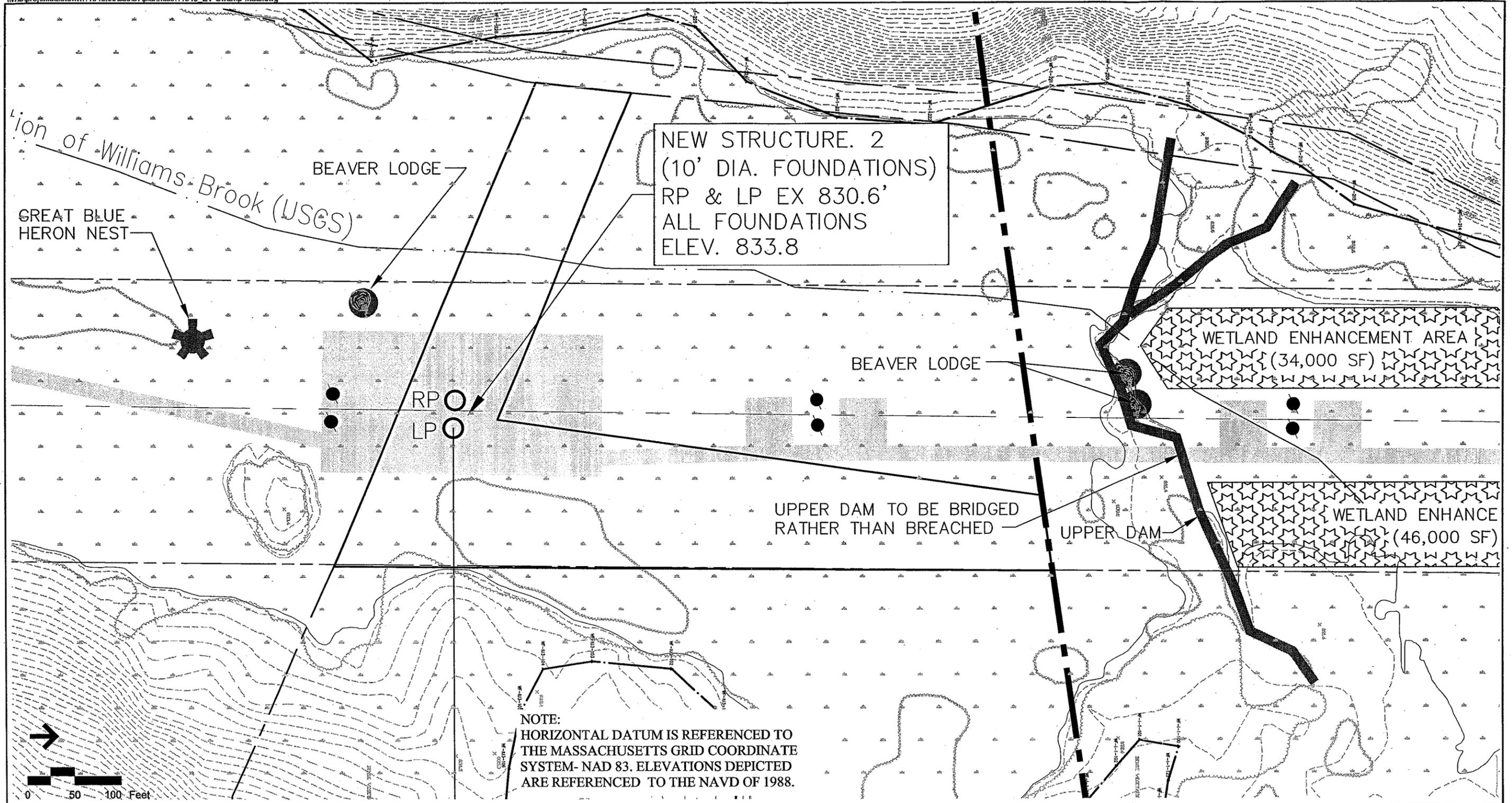
Figure Ev-2

AT: Richardson Road
IN: Montague / Leverett
Franklin County
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

354 RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

APPLICATION BY:
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DATE	March, 2011
SHEET	2
OF	2



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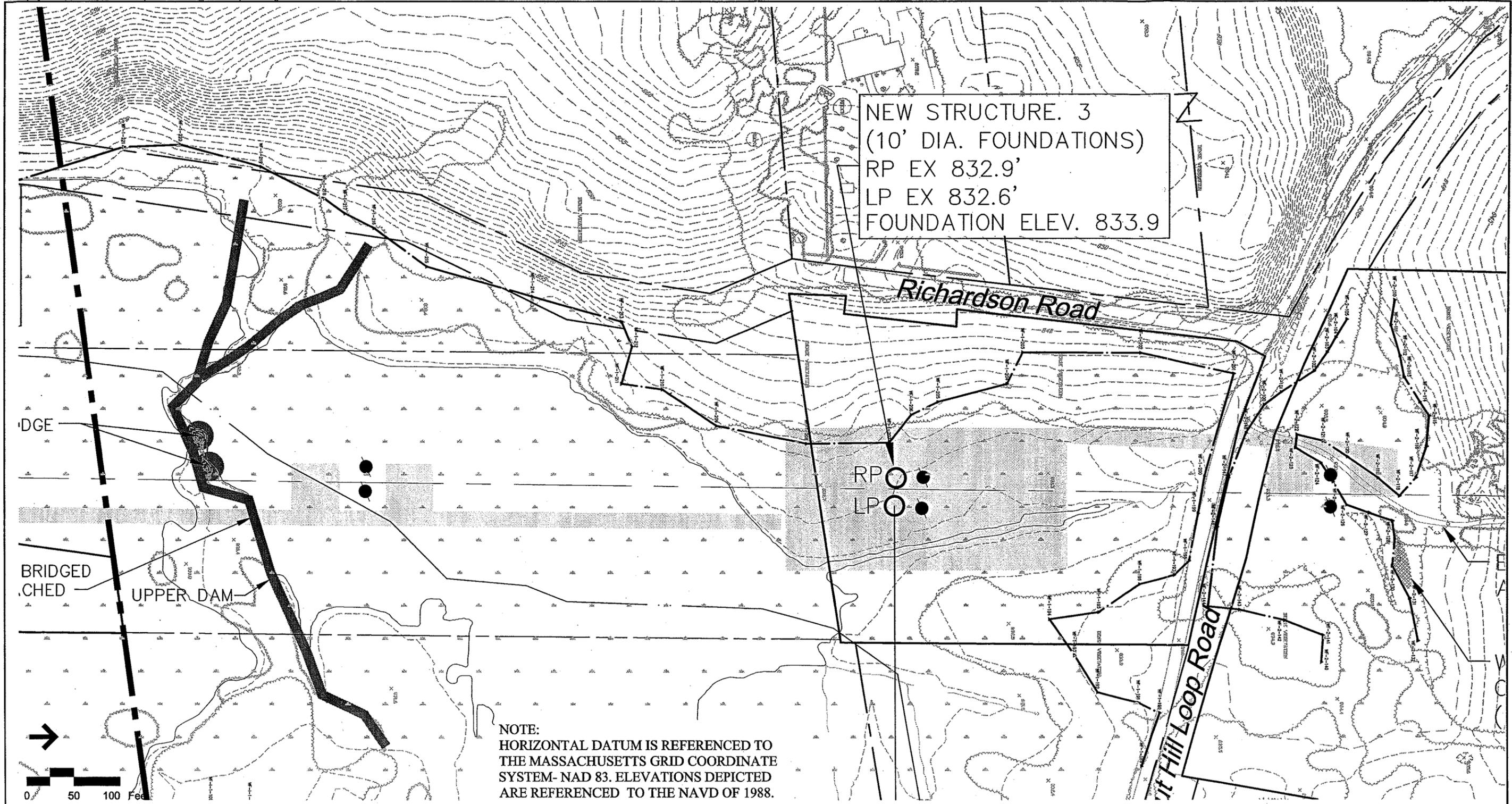
Figure Str-2

AT: Richardson Road
IN: Montague / Leverett
Franklin County
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE #2

APPLICATION BY:
Western Massachusetts Electric Company
c/o Northeast Utilities Service Company

DATE	March, 2011
SHEET	1 OF 2




Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Transportation
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 Watertown, MA 02471
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Figure Str-3

AT: Richardson Road
 IN: Montague / Leverett
 Franklin County
 Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE #3

APPLICATION BY:
 Western Massachusetts Electric Company
 c/o Northeast Utilities Service Company

DATE	March, 2011
SHEET	2 OF 2