

**DRAFT**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

**Fox Point Hurricane Barrier, Providence, Rhode Island**

**Continued Operation and Maintenance**

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1500-1508) for implementing the procedural provisions of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et. seq.) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Regulation 33 CFR 230 (*Procedures for Implementing NEPA*), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted an environmental assessment (EA) of potential environmental effects associated with the continued operation and maintenance of the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier (Hurricane Barrier) located in the City of Providence, Rhode Island.

The EA evaluates the operation and maintenance of the Hurricane Barrier in regard to its designated purpose of protecting of the City of Providence from flooding due to large storms such as hurricanes. The Corps of Engineers also, when requested, operates the Hurricane Barrier to support water-based recreational activities such as WaterFire Providence®.

In 2010, USACE assumed ownership of the river barrier and all components within the barrier (bank to bank) including: west abutment, pumping station, central barrier, river gates, and east barrier-east abutment. The City of Providence operates and maintains all other portions of the project including: the west dike and extension, retaining walls (formerly east dike), vehicular gates and drainage structures, which include six sewer relief gates. The City of Providence must operate its portion of the project in conjunction with USACE to obtain protection from hurricanes and large storms.

The Hurricane Barrier is operated in accordance with its authorized purposes, including response to major storms, during maintenance activities and in support of recreation activities. The environmental impacts associated with this flood damage reduction project are not significant, and its presence ensures USACE has the ability to protect the City of Providence during major storms and support cultural activities that have substantial positive economic benefit to the State of Rhode Island.

Impacts were analyzed for water resources, fish and wildlife, vegetation and wetlands, endangered and threatened species, land use and recreation areas, socioeconomics, cultural resources, air quality and noise, and floodplains. My determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the EA and the following considerations:

Impacts on public health or safety: The operation and maintenance of the project protects downtown Providence, including commercial areas, transportation facilities, public utilities, and homes, against tidal flooding from hurricanes and other coastal storms.

Unique characteristics: There is an active river herring run through the Hurricane Barrier and up the Woonasquatucket River. No specific restrictions associated with this run are maintained for the operation, maintenance and recreational support activities at the Hurricane Barrier; all closures are temporary and any impacts to fish and aquatic species will be short-term.

Controversy: The operation and maintenance of the project, and related support for recreation activities is not controversial.

Uncertain impacts: The impacts of the proposed project are not uncertain; they are readily understood based on past operation, maintenance and recreation support activities.

Precedent for future actions: The operation, maintenance and support for recreation-based activities are part of the authorized purposes for this Flood Damage Reduction Project. Its continued use will not establish a precedent for future actions.

Cumulative significance: There are no reasonably foreseeable activities associated with this project to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment.

Historic resources: The operation and maintenance of the project will have no known adverse impact on historic properties, nor will it result in adverse impacts on properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Endangered species: The project will have no impacts to Federal threatened or endangered species or state-listed species of concern, rare or endangered species.

Potential violation of state or federal law: The operation and maintenance of the project will not violate Federal or state laws.

Measures to minimize adverse environmental effects from the routine operation and maintenance actions and operation for recreational events are discussed in the EA. The EA lists routine operation and maintenance activities that are considered categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation.

Based on my review and evaluation of the environmental effects as presented in the EA, I have determined that the continued operation and maintenance of the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier in Providence, Rhode Island is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, this project is exempt from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Christopher J. Barron  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Engineer