

DORMITORY AUTHORITY of the STATE of NEW YORK
NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION
AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW
POSITIVE DECLARATION

Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Determination of Significance

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

NOTICE OF AGENCY SCOPING MEETING

Date: June 8, 2007

Co-Lead Agencies: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
Agency Building 1
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12238

Dormitory Authority of the State of New York
515 Broadway
Albany, New York 12207-2964

Applicant: The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries
199 Main Street
Beacon, New York 12508

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations (*State Environmental Quality Review*) pertaining to Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, as co-lead agencies, have determined that the Proposed Action described below may have a significant effect on the environment and that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be prepared. A public scoping meeting will be conducted to allow all involved and interested agencies and members of the public an opportunity to comment on the scope of the DEIS.

Title of Action: *Master Plan for The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries at Denning's Point in Hudson Highlands State Park*

SEQR Status: Type I Action — 6 N.Y.C.R.R. 617.4(b)(10)

Review Type: Coordinated Review

Description of Proposed Action and Proposed Project

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) have received a request from The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries (“The Beacon Institute”) to prepare a Master Plan which will include the design, development, and construction of the *Center for Advanced Environmental Technology Project*. For the purpose of SEQR, the Proposed Actions consist of DASNY’s authorization of the undertaking and construction of the *Center for Advanced Environmental Technology* facility, and OPRHP’s approval of both The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries’ *Master Plan* and a Cooperative Management Agreement with The Beacon Institute for the management and stewardship of the Denning’s Point section of the Hudson Highlands State Park in the City of Beacon.

The Proposed Actions will be financed by the State of New York (a \$25-million appropriation under the NYS 2006-07 Executive Budget), the New York State Department of Transportation (\$500,000), and the New York Power Authority (\$7.758 million). DASNY and OPRHP are not involved with the funding of the Proposed Project.

More specifically, the action is the development, adoption, and implementation of a *Master Plan* describing the current and future institutional plans of The Beacon Institute. The centerpiece of those plans is the design and construction of The Institute’s *Center for Advanced Environmental Technology* (“CAET”), an approximately 40,000-gross-square-foot environmental research facility to be roughly located within the footprint of the former paper clip factory on the northern portion of Denning’s Point.

The purpose of the *Master Plan* is to allow The Beacon Institute to plan its activities comprehensively. While the *Center for Advanced Environmental Technology (CAET)* represents the cornerstone of the Institute's plans, it is envisioned that as The Beacon Institute grows, additions to the *CAET* facility or new buildings may be considered within the northern portion of Denning's Point and its vicinity. As a result, the *Master Plan* will also evaluate feasibility and flexibility options for growth allowances, additional facilities and program expansions, describing them in as much detail as is possible at this time.

In addition to describing the Institute's current and future institutional activities, the *Master Plan* will describe the Institute's plans for improvements to the state park facilities at Denning's Point, described in OPRHP's *Interim Management Guide for Denning's Point* (January 2007) (see *Park Enhancements* below).

The following paragraphs provide a detailed description of the several elements that, collectively, constitute the Proposed Action:

Center for Advanced Environmental Technology (CAET). The *Center for Advanced Environmental Technology (CAET)* is envisioned as an approximately 40,000-gsf, two- or three-story environmental research facility. *CAET* will support research and development in technologies for large-scale environmental observation and monitoring with a high level of public interface for both park visitors and educational programs. *CAET* will be a base for partnerships and collaborative study between the Institute's faculty, the region's top research institutions, industry leaders and policy makers, with a focus on developing advanced monitoring and observation technologies for the study and management of rivers and estuaries.

The *CAET* facility would contain administrative offices, research offices, general laboratory facilities for routine biological and chemical testing and analysis, research/building support facilities, assembly/meeting and educational program spaces, as well as areas for public information-sharing and community access. The *CAET* facility will be designed to accommodate not only formal and scheduled public uses but also casual and unscheduled public uses. At maximum capacity, the *CAET* facility would be capable of accommodating up to 400 people within its assembly/meeting spaces including the lobby as well as a large conference center (containing an approximately 200-seat auditorium adaptable to multiple functions including dining events) plus smaller ancillary meeting rooms and galleries. During regular business hours it is anticipated that approximately 80 to 100 persons (administrative/research/support staff) would be employed at *CAET*.

The specific dimensions of the *CAET* facility will be determined upon completion of the master planning effort and subsequent architectural design effort. The proposed *CAET* facility would be built to the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code.

Park Enhancements. Denning's Point is a park unit within the Hudson Highlands State Park.¹ The Beacon Institute would undertake improvements to the state park facilities at Denning's Point, in concurrence with OPRHP's *Interim Management Guide for Denning's Point* (January 2007).² The potential improvements may include trail enhancement, interpretive signs, and habitat restoration.

Cooperative Management Agreement between OPRHP and The Beacon Institute. While Denning's Point would remain part of the Hudson Highlands State Park under OPRHP jurisdiction, it is envisioned that OPRHP and The Institute would enter into a Cooperative Management Agreement for the management, stewardship and educational interpretation of the rich ecology of Denning's Point. Under such cooperative agreement, OPRHP would grant The Beacon Institute a license to occupy and use the northern portion of Denning's Point and its existing facilities (i.e., "Licensed Premises") for the development of its facilities (e.g., *CAET*) identified under the *Master Plan*. Concurrently, OPRHP would grant The Beacon Institute a license to undergo and maintain the proposed park enhancements (identified under the *Master Plan* and as mentioned above) within the southern portion of Denning's Point. Subject to OPRHP's approval, the final details of this Cooperative Management Agreement will be dictated by the findings of the *SEQR* Process and its associated public involvement.

Adaptive Re-Use or Demolition of the Vacant Paper Clip Factory. The approximately 40,000-gross-square-foot (gsf) former Noesting Pin Ticket Company paper clip factory, located adjacent to Denning's Point Bay, will be considered for either adaptive re-use or demolition. At this point in time, the re-use of the paper clip factory or the siting of the proposed *CAET* facility within its footprint is still to be determined based on the future findings of a building structural inspection and the *Master Plan*.

Railroad Crossing Replacement/Rehabilitation. The Proposed Project involves the upgrading of two railroad crossings. Denning's Point is accessible via a narrow one-lane and weight-restricted bridge (22 tons) which crosses the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("MTA") Metro-North Hudson Line commuter railroad tracks. Due to construction vehicle, emergency response (e.g., police/fire department, etc.) and pedestrian access requirements, the existing bridge must be rehabilitated or replaced under the Proposed Project. The feasibility of

¹ Hudson Highlands State Park is a mostly undeveloped preserve of nearly 6,000 acres. The park consists of a series of separate parcels of land along the Hudson River stretching from Annsville Creek in Peekskill, north to Denning's Point in Beacon. Activities in the park include fishing, boating, hiking, and birding. The parklands at Denning's Point encompass the 64-acre peninsula as well as approximately 160 acres at the mouth of Fishkill Creek.

² The purpose of the *Interim Management Guide for Denning's Point* is to ensure the continued protection of the park unit's natural, cultural and scenic resources while providing safe recreational opportunities that are compatible with those resources. Recognizing The Beacon Institute's proposed developments on the northern portion of the peninsula, this guide provides management direction for the existing and future recreational opportunities, environmental and cultural resource protection and the overall operation of this park unit based on activities that have been traditionally allowed such as trail uses, birding, canoeing and kayaking, shoreline fishing, picnicking, environmental interpretation and archaeological research. Such management directions will be expanded and incorporated into The Institute's *Master Plan* so that the potential improvements may include trail enhancement, interpretive signs, and habitat restoration.

either the rehabilitation or replacement scenarios is currently under evaluation through a partnership with the New York State Department of Transportation (“NYSDOT”). An at-grade crossing with an underused freight rail spur of the Housatonic Railroad is located approximately 100 yards west of the existing Metro-North railroad bridge. This crossing would be upgraded with new signals and gates.

Parking and Site Access Improvements. Public vehicular access would be prohibited on Denning’s Point, with the exception of emergency and State Park vehicles as well as certain permitted vehicles such as handicapped permit holders, delivery vehicles and the shuttle buses. The Proposed Project involves the development of a parking lot on the now closed and capped City of Beacon municipal landfill, located adjacent to the City’s wastewater treatment plant at the end of Denning’s Avenue. The parking lot would act as a gateway and introduction to The Beacon Institute facilities on Denning’s Point, and the closed landfill would be adaptively re-designed with sustainable landscaping concepts and permeable materials for parking use. Based on the anticipated growth of The Beacon Institute, two parking phases are currently envisioned. For the first phase, the parking lot would be initially designed for approximately 200 vehicles to serve visitors and staff of the existing Building One as well as the proposed *CAET* facility and improved state park facilities at Denning’s Point. The first design phase would also accommodate plans for a potential second phase of expansion with 200 additional car spaces in such a way that future construction will not hinder day-to-day operations of the initial phase.

The sole access road to Denning’s Point is an unpaved extension of Denning’s Avenue running between the Metro-North rail corridor and the closed landfill. This road may need to be re-positioned to the east onto the landfill and upgraded to serve as access to the proposed parking lot. The circulation patterns would be designed in a way to direct vehicles away from pedestrian traffic and to accommodate occasional use by a shuttle service. Vehicular access to Denning’s Point would be controlled by a gate and card-reader at the bridge over the Metro-North Hudson Line railroad tracks.

From the new access road, vehicles would be directed towards several options to either (i) turn around and exit the site, (ii) drop off passengers near the bridge at a designated shelter, (iii) enter the lot and park one’s car, or (iv) validate one’s security at the gates to enter Denning’s Point. Within the parking lot, pedestrians will collect at an inner walkway proceeding downhill towards the bridge. Along the central entrance spine from the bridge down to Denning’s Point, pedestrian traffic will be separated whenever possible from that of vehicles. Similarly to the proposed parking lot, the central entrance spine would be improved to a hard-surfaced pathway with sustainable landscaping concepts and permeable materials. Within Denning’s Point, it is anticipated that the central spine would be designed with a vehicular loop at the *CAET* facility for permitted vehicles.

As noted above, all site improvements (including the parking lot, access road and central spine) would be constructed with sustainable landscaping concepts such as innovative

bioretention methods and permeable techniques (e.g., gravel, bio-swale paths) in order to control stormwater runoff.

Vessel Dock/Pier and Harborfront Building at the Beacon Harbor (as part of the City's Harbor Management Plan). The City of Beacon, in cooperation with the NYSDOS' Division of Coastal Resources ("NYSDOS-DCR"), is currently finalizing a Harbor Management Plan ("HMP") as an attachment to the City's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan ("LWRP"). As part of the HMP's effort to address the management of its harborfront and to concentrate water-dependent uses in the Beacon Harbor, the HMP has identified the need for a multi-use deep-water dock and shore-side public facility, which would support surface water uses and provide the community with a gateway to the waterfront. The deep-water dock would serve multiple users including The Beacon Institute's research vessels, the Clearwater and Woody Guthrie educational ships, visiting excursion boats; as well as other public uses. The Harborfront Building would also serve multiple public functions including: a Harbormaster's office; a community meeting center for all the harbor-related organizations (i.e., the Sloop Club, the Dutchess Boat Club, Scenic Hudson, The Beacon Institute, and Long Dock Beacon); educational space and work areas for The Beacon Institute's research vessels; as well as much needed public amenities for harbor visitors, commuters, and ferry users.

While the approval and adoption of the HMP by the City of Beacon and NYSDOS-DCR are discretionary actions subject to their own *SEQR* (expected to commence in 2007), the multi-use deep-water dock and Harborfront Building constitute a related element of the Proposed Project and its future operation. Therefore, this *SEQR* review will also include and address those two proposed activities at Beacon Harbor.

Location of Proposed Project

The Proposed Project would be developed on and adjacent to the 64-acre peninsula of Denning's Point, a park unit within the Hudson Highlands State Park located along the Hudson River in the City of Beacon, Dutchess County, New York.

Reasons Supporting This Determination

Overview. On February 16, 2007, The Beacon Institute submitted an *Environmental Assessment Form – Part I (EAF-Part I)* to OPRHP and DASNY which formally commenced the *SEQR* process. In accordance with the provisions of *SEQR*, OPRHP and DASNY issued a lead agency request letter to the involved agencies and interested parties on February 16, 2007. The letter indicated that OPRHP and DASNY had made a preliminary determination that the proposed project was a Type I action and proposed to serve as co-lead agencies and conduct a

coordinated review among the involved agencies. There being no objections, OPRHP and DASNY assumed the co-lead agency role on March 16, 2007.

OPRHP and DASNY, as *SEQOR* co-lead agencies, have determined that the Proposed Project may generate significant adverse environmental impacts and, as a result, a *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)* must be prepared. In accordance with *SEQOR*, OPRHP and DASNY are initiating a process to define the scope of the *DEIS*. As a first step in that process, a Draft Scoping Document for the *DEIS* has been prepared and is being made available to the involved and interested agencies and to members of the public for review and comment. A copy of the Draft Scoping Document is included with this notice. The co-lead agencies invite comments on the scope of work for the *DEIS*. A public scoping meeting will be held, and written comments from the public are requested (see below).

Traffic, Transportation and Parking. Streets likely to receive the greatest proportion of project-generated traffic include: New York State Route 9D, Denning's Avenue and Hudson Avenue. Given the number of peak-hour vehicle trips that would be generated by the Proposed Project, there is potential for significant traffic impacts. Accordingly, a quantitative traffic analysis will be necessary to identify the impacted roadways and intersections. It is assumed that the 200-space parking lot to be provided would be sufficient to accommodate the project-generated vehicles for staff and visitors. Therefore, a parking analysis is not necessary for this study.

Air Quality. Intersections along the potentially impacted roadways (*e.g.*, New York State Route 9D, Denning's Avenue and Hudson Avenue) may accommodate significant volumes of existing traffic, particularly during the peak hours. The potential exists for significant air quality impacts. Therefore, the intersections of these streets are likely candidates for detailed air quality analysis.

Noise Quality. Changes in traffic volume can result in potential noise impacts at sensitive receptors such as residences, parks, and schools. The Proposed Project study area contains several sensitive uses located along roadways that are likely to provide access to the project site. The potential for noise impacts at these locations will require a thorough analysis.

Construction Impacts. Because of the proximity of a residential neighborhood immediately north and east of the Proposed Project site, potential construction-related impacts may occur. Such impacts may include: noise and vibration impacts; subsurface effects associated with excavation and dewatering of the proposed site; air quality effects associated with fugitive dust, construction equipment and additional traffic congestion; and traffic effects during construction.

Agency Scoping Meeting:

An agency scoping meeting will be held at:

2:00 P.M.
Tuesday, June 26, 2007

The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries
199 Main Street
Beacon, New York 12508

The purpose of the agency scoping meeting is to allow all involved and interested agencies an opportunity to comment on the scope of the *DEIS*.

Public Scoping Meeting:

A public scoping meeting will be held at:

7:00 P.M.
Tuesday, June 26, 2007

The Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries
199 Main Street
Beacon, New York 12508

The purpose of the public scoping meeting is to allow all members of the public an opportunity to comment on the scope of the *DEIS*. A copy of the Draft Scoping Document is included with this notice. Additional copies of the Draft Scoping Document can be obtained via a written request to the contact person or at the public scoping meeting. Written comments on the Draft Scoping Document may be sent to the contact person and will be accepted for a period of ten (10) calendar days following the close of the Public Scoping Meeting.

For further information, contact:

Mr. Matthew A. Stanley, AICP
Senior Environmental Manager
Dormitory Authority
of the State of New York
One Penn Plaza, 52nd Floor
New York, New York 10119-0098
(212) 273-5097(212) 273-5121

Or

Mr. Thomas B. Lyons
Director of Resource Management
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 1
Albany, New York 12238
(518) 474-0409
(518) 474-7013 fax