

Kara Runsten, MVP Program Manager  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

May 4, 2023

Re: **“Taking Root: Expanding the Ayer-Devens Pocket Forest Project” 2023 MVP Grant**

Dear Ms. Runsten,

I am writing on behalf of the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) in support of the DEC and Ayer’s Regional Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant Application to fund **“Taking Root: Expanding the Ayer-Devens Pocket Forest Project”**: our follow-up to the 2022 Main Streets Regional Pocket Forests Pilot Project. This project will help further both communities ongoing efforts to protect, restore, and enhance local natural features in support of long-term climate resilience and community health,

The DEC strongly supports this grant application, including its intent to add accessible green space, support mental and physical health, and create multiple and intersecting environmental benefits that align with all the MVP Core Principles. We will be engaging with the Town of Ayer and the Ayer-Shirley Regional School District to plant and monitor pocket forests and expand the environmental curriculum to support students and teachers to integrate nature-based climate solutions into school curriculums. We are also excited to continue engaging with the United Native American Cultural Center and Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School who will be partnering with DEC on one of the Pocket Forest planting locations in the public park next to their buildings.

This project will enable Ayer and Devens to continue integrating the natural and built environments by planning, designing, and building pocket forests for strategically valuable locations that emphasize equitable outcomes for Environmental Justice (EJ) and Climate Vulnerable (CV) populations.

The Devens Enterprise Commission was created by Chapter 498 of MGL Acts of 1993 with a mission of ensuring that Devens became a model of Sustainable Redevelopment of a former military base (Fort Devens) and that it serves as a model for regional collaboration. We believe this project advances both of these goals set forth in the Devens ReUse Plan.

With climate impacts continuing to increase in frequency and intensity, community preparedness, education and awareness, and relationship-building are more important than ever for ensuring resilient, healthy, and thriving communities into the future. We believe this project will increase our community’s capacity to achieve these goals and look forward to being part of the team.

Sincerely,

*William P. Marshall*

William P. Marshall, Chairman  
Devens Enterprise Commission



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