

# WETLAND DETERMINATION REPORT

## MBTA Commuter Rail, Turnback Track Reading, Massachusetts

*Prepared For:*

**Keolis Commuter Services  
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*Prepared By:*

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## OVERVIEW

Seekamp Environmental Consulting, Inc. (SEC) has prepared the following Report on behalf of Keolis Commuter Services to accompany the permit filing for the proposed Reading Turnback Track project Notice of Intent filing. This report is intended to provide information regarding several existing isolated stormwater / ditches along the proposed track improvement area, and their status with respect to MA DEP wetland jurisdiction to down gradient, offsite Bordering Vegetated Wetlands primarily located on Town of Reading Conservation Land.

### **Upland Forested Swale Between Railroad Ditch and BVW Area:**

SEC delineated several offsite BVW areas for the purpose of establishing the Buffer Zone nature of all the proposed work for the Turnback Track project. Following a site walk with the Reading Conservation Commission to review the few wetland flags hung by SEC, the Commission requested additional information (MA DEP Data Plot / vegetation, hydrology, and soils) with respect to a low swale shaped feature in the adjacent upland forest between the terminus of one of the railroad ditches and the BVW area (flags AA1 - AA3) located approximately 150 feet down slope on the Town's Conservation Land.

The field work was completed on January 21, 2025. SEC prepared a MA DEP BVW Data Plot within the center of the swale along with two soil probes documenting the upland vegetative and non-hydric soils features of the area. **(See Attached Data Plot and Soils Probe Information).**

The result of our investigation is **there is no wetland connection between the end of the railroad ditch and the BVW area on the Town Conservation Land down slope.** The attached Data Plot and Soil Probes clarify the upland nature of this area. In addition there is no defined channel or other evidence of flow between the ditch and the BVW area. The ditch, while populated with primarily phragmites, in our opinion is generally an isolated storm water feature constructed during railroad development to facilitate railroad drainage off the track area.

### **Existing Rail Road Storm Water Ditch Jurisdiction:**

There are several isolated ditches along the north side of the track adjacent to the proposed Turnback Track location. These are distinct ditches presumably constructed to receive and convey stormwater off the active rail pad. In general the soils along this long occupied section of track are disturbed and/or typically graded with railroad ballast throughout, including within the ditches. Occasional wetland vegetation will grow in these ditches over time. They are, however, isolated and do not connect to offsite wetland areas. While these may represent features often deemed jurisdictional by some Towns under local By-law definitions, **in our opinion they would not likely be jurisdictional under the MA Wetlands Protection Act** due to their small size / volumetrics, and the fact that they are clearly designed for stormwater management along the active commuter rail.

**BVW Across Tracks (south side) behind Switch Houses:**

SEC flagged (B1 - B3) the boundary of the wetland area running parallel to the track in the vicinity of the switch Houses so that Buffer Zone jurisdiction can be clarified. The wetland here is typically located just off the Railroad right of way.

**Riverfront Area:**

SEC placed several flags (RF1 - RF5) to denote the uppermost extent of the Mean Annual High Water (MAHW) of the Aberjona river along north side of the Rail line to establish the extent of the Riverfront Resource Area. RF1 - RF5 defines the Mean Annual High Water (MAHW) of the Aberjona River as best professional judgment within the complex greater marsh / scrub shrub habitat. The basis for determining MAHW is evidence of biological indicators (Trees rooted on the bank, etc.) along the opposite bank of the river where the slope is better defined, and the point where the vegetative community along "our" side of the river transitions from primary emergent (cattails, sedges, buttonbush shrub) and becomes more dominated by terrestrial wetland species (red maple trees, silky dogwood and speckled alder shrubs).