



January 22, 2024

Cambridge Conservation Commission
147 Hampshire Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
Sent in care of: jletourneau@cambridgema.gov

To the Conservation Commission:

Mass Audubon is pleased to have this opportunity to offer our support and comments on the Notice of Intent application by IQHQ for Jerry's Pond Circulation and Access.

Mass Audubon staff have been part of the the community engagement process for the project since May 2021, when we were invited to join in monthly meetings between IQHQ and other community constituents. During this process, we have been grateful for IQHQ's willingness to listen to input, respond to concerns, and offer collaborative options to increase the benefits of the project for the community.

While Jerry's Pond originated as a manmade excavation, nature has taken its course over 60+ years, and the pond now has ecological value in providing wildlife habitat and tree canopy. By removing invasives, adding native plantings, and increasing flood storage, IQHQ's site plan improves the functional value of Jerry's Pond. Providing universally accessible pathways and boardwalks for residents and commuters to enjoy the pond also provides value to the community and increases equitable and inclusive access to nature. IQHQ's support for the construction of an Eco Center pavilion will also bring great benefit in allowing Cambridge residents to spend time in nature and to see the pond as a valuable habitat for wildlife. We look forward to provide nature programming for children and adults, and to seeing Jerry's Pond thrive as a site of ongoing environmental education opportunities for the community.

Over the course of the design phase, IQHQ has incorporated several recommendations from Mass Audubon to improve the environmental benefits of these plans, including:

- (1) Moving the siting of the Eco Center from the western to the eastern edge of the pond, which allows for a quieter spot farther away from vehicle traffic and emissions



- (2) Sizing the Eco Center to meet Mass Audubon's recommendations for educational engagement of children and adults
- (3) Adopting Mass Audubon's best practices for invasive removal techniques, which we follow on our own wildlife sanctuary properties, and
- (4) Following Mass Audubon's recommended modifications to the original plant list to incorporate a variety of native species with higher wildlife habitat value.

Mass Audubon has also provided input on opportunities to increase depaving and tree planting, within the limitations of the Activity and Use Limitation, and IQHQ has been open to those comments as part of this conservation review process. We also strongly recommend preserving and maintaining as many of the existing mature trees as possible, and ensuring that appropriate invasive species management is an on-going priority.

While more enhancements are always possible in a project as large and complex as this, we feel that IQHQ has presented a plan that does indeed represent meaningful improvements to the Jerry's Pond habitat and that provides significant community benefit in a feasible manner.

Mass Audubon has been grateful to work in partnership with IQHQ, Alewife Study Group, Friends of Jerry's Pond, Green Cambridge, and community representatives on the vision for Jerry's Pond over the past two and a half years. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,



Renata Pomponi
Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives
(operating in Cambridge from Mass Audubon's Magazine Beach Park Nature Center at 668 Memorial Drive)