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## **DCR SEEKS OUTSIDE OPERATORS FOR FIVE ICE RINKS**

*Municipal, private, or nonprofit partners could earn operating permits for  
Medford, Milton, Quincy, and Somerville rinks*

As part of the Patrick-Murray Administration's efforts to streamline government operations and work cooperatively with local partners, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is seeking proposals from municipalities, nonprofit groups, and private companies interested in operating five DCR ice rinks in Medford, Milton, Quincy, and Somerville. Currently, 29 other DCR rinks are operated by non-state entities.

DCR has issued Requests for Proposals to operate, manage, and maintain the LoConte Memorial Rink and Flynn Memorial Rink in Medford, Ulin Memorial Rink in Milton, Shea Memorial Rink in Quincy, and Veterans Memorial Rink in Somerville. The permittees will be required to offer at least 16 hours a week of public skating (20 hours during public school vacation weeks), as well as additional hours for youth groups and school hockey. Preference will be given to municipalities and nonprofit groups.

"Engaging outside entities to operate DCR rinks makes enormous sense, particularly in these difficult economic times," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "More than half of DCR's ice rinks already are managed by corporations, municipalities, or nonprofit groups. These arrangements have proven to be an excellent way to maintain the high standards of recreation opportunities that people rightfully expect from these state facilities."

DCR owns 43 ice rinks across the Commonwealth. Currently, 19 of those rinks are managed by a professional management company. Another nine rinks are managed by municipalities, and one is managed by a nonprofit group. The remaining 14 rinks are operated by DCR.

Since 2002, when the state began leasing the management of ice rinks to non-state entities, the benefits of those partnerships have been many. The non-state operators have invested more than \$14 million in capital improvements to the rinks at no cost to taxpayers. Those improvements have included energy conservation measures, new lighting and mechanical systems, and new ice slabs.

In addition, the leased rinks are open for a longer skating season, as they open earlier and stay open longer – an average of five months longer than state-operated rinks. They operate under

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the same guidelines as state-operated rinks, including the number of public skating hours that must be offered, minimum maintenance and capital expenditures, and insurance requirements.

"I am pleased that DCR is moving forward with its plans to enter into management agreements for rinks in Medford and Somerville," said state Senator Patricia Jehlen. "Working together with DCR and our municipal partners offers an excellent opportunity to provide recreational opportunities to young and old alike."

"Leasing these rinks ensures better skating facilities for our children, better value for their parents, and a better return to the state's taxpayers," said state Senator Brian A. Joyce.

"The fiscal climate we find ourselves in requires us to investigate all avenues for cost savings," said state Senator Michael W. Morrissey. "The Administration has had success with these types of ventures in the past, and I would support such private-public partnerships rather than seeing these valuable facilities close down. As we move forward, it is important that we continue to maintain affordable access to skating."

"DCR's decision to seek non-state entities to operate Shea Memorial Rink in Quincy is especially important in these economic times, when innovative ways to operate government are most needed," said House Assistant Majority Leader Ronald Mariano of Quincy. "The fiscal benefits reaped from DCR's public-private partnerships are many, but most importantly, they provide increased access to rinks without increased cost to taxpayers."

"I am pleased DCR could work with officials at the local and state level to form new partnerships and create a solution that allows communities and youth organizations to continue to use the rinks at an affordable rate," said Representative Katherine Clark of Melrose. "In my community, Melrose Youth Hockey can now afford to use all of the Flynn Memorial Rink facilities. In turn, this fosters the talent and development of over 250 Melrose youth hockey players and ensures the quality and vitality of the program."

"Given the cuts in the DCR budget, turning the rinks over to municipalities and non-profit groups ensures that these important recreational facilities will be properly maintained," said State Rep. Paul Donato of Medford.

State Representative Jason Lewis of Winchester said, "I applaud the initiative that DCR is pursuing through public-private partnerships to continue to offer high-quality services to the public even in these difficult economic times. These ice rinks will now be able to provide more ice time for our youth hockey programs and public skating and be open for a longer skating season."

State Rep. Carl Sciortino of Medford said, “This is a great opportunity for kids and families in our community. I believe that local partnerships will promote community access to the ice rinks and improve the quality of the facilities. These rinks are a wonderful resource that our families can continue to utilize and enjoy for years to come.”

“We’re excited about the opportunity for another positive partnership between the City of Somerville and DCR,” said Somerville Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone, “and we’re eager to complete an agreement on managing the Veterans Memorial Rink as a public resource for the entire region. In 2006, the City and DCR created a similar partnership at Dilboy Stadium, which has become a regional facility used for all occasions, from youth leagues to high school and scholastic sporting events. I want to thank Commissioner Sullivan and the entire DCR team for their leadership, and I look forward to continued collaboration between Somerville and the Commonwealth on cost-effective solutions that make the most of our shared recreational facilities.”

Medford Mayor Michael J. McGlynn said, "We are excited to have the chance to look into this opportunity to make youth sports more accessible for all of the children of Medford"

DCR is seeking outside management for the five rinks at a time when the agency’s budget is more than 20 percent less than it was at the start of Fiscal Year 2009. In recognition of additional budget challenges going forward, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) held six listening sessions in November to take public input on options for changes in administrative structures and programs. Commissioner Sullivan co-led two listening sessions on public-private partnerships. These sessions gathered input on the potential for greater sharing of responsibility for the management and operation of DCR properties with other public and private entities in a way that preserves and enhances opportunity for active, outdoor recreation by the public.

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*The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency’s mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr). Contact us at [mass.parks@state.ma.us](mailto:mass.parks@state.ma.us).*

