

Walden Pond Visitor Services Workshop



DCR Public Meeting

March 24, 2011

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Hunt Recreation Center, Concord



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor

Deval L. Patrick

Lieutenant Governor

Timothy Murray

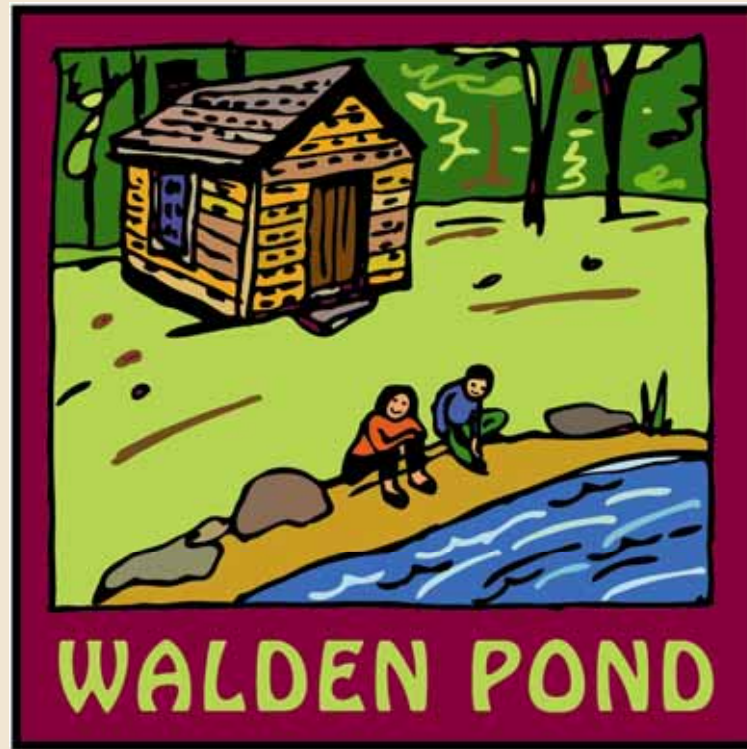
Energy and Environmental Secretary

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner

Edward M. Lambert, Jr.

DCR Mission Statement



To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources.

Tonight's Meeting



Purpose

Elicit stakeholder and public input on visitor services at Walden Pond State Reservation

Meeting Format

Presentation of Background Information

- Management Challenges/Considerations at Walden
- Why a Visitor Center is Envisioned?
- Existing Interpretative Programming
- Examples of DCR Visitor Centers

Structured Discussion

- How do you define the Walden visitor experience?
- What should a visitor center at Walden be?
- What should affect the design of a new visitor center?

Open Comment Period



Planning Process for Walden Pond

- Crosby, Schlessinger, and Smallridge (CSS) hired to prepare two planning products:
 - Resource Management Plan (RMP)
 - Provide a guide to the short and long-term management of properties under the stewardship of the DCR
 - Make recommendations to address identified management issues and protect/enhance resources
 - Visitor Services Master Plan
 - Understand and improve visitor experience
 - Recommend internal / external access improvements
 - Identify conceptual alternatives for visitor center
 - Identify and complement area resources
- Kickoff meeting held in December 2010

Issues/Challenges for Reservation

- External access to the Reservation
 - Traffic
 - Accommodation of out-of-state or international visitors during park closures
- Access / circulation within the Reservation
 - Lack of universal accessibility
 - Flooding of beaches/trails
 - Safe crossing of Route 126
- Balancing high visitation/ resource stewardship
- Balancing the range of users and variety of recreational activities



Image Credit: Matt Hartzell



Considerations for Ongoing Management

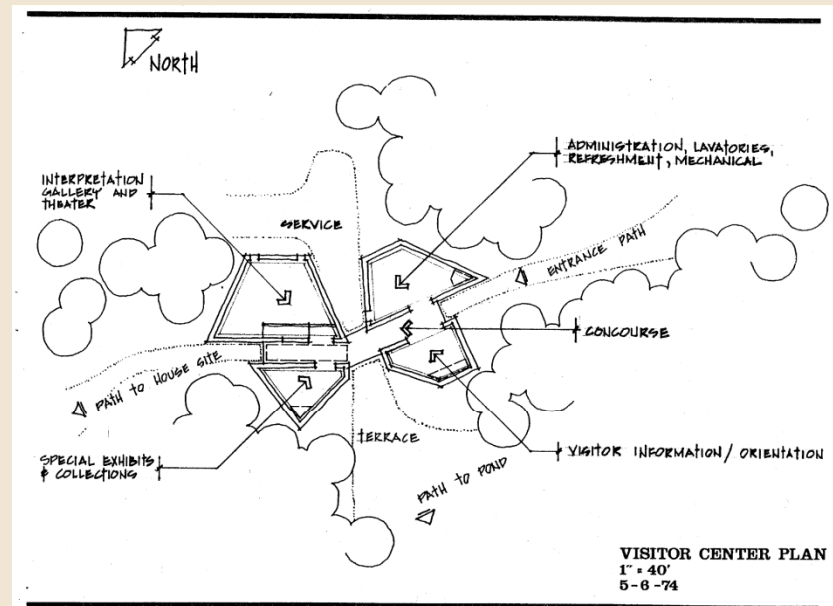
- Compliance with provisions in 1922 transfer to public ownership
 - Four identified recreation activities (boating, bathing, fishing, and picnicking)
- Limits on visitation from 1974 Gardiner Report
 - “1,000-people-at-one-time” limit
 - Administered by closure at full parking lot capacity
- New Visitor Center
 - Need identified in previous planning efforts



A Visitor Center at Walden: Why?

- Need for visitor center identified in previous planning documents:
 - 1974 "Gardiner Report"
 - 1993 GOALS plan
- Centralized location for visitor services including interpretative materials and orientation
 - Exhibits
 - Large Groups
- Focal point for communicating enormous significance of reservation

Conceptual Rendering of Visitor Center from 1974 Gardiner Report



Summary of Existing Interpretive Programs

- Conducted by DCR staff (mostly with seasonal employees) in consultation with partnering organizations
- Most programming occurs between April and October (Peak demand occurs in September and October)
- Core Interpretive Programs
 - Thoreau (his stay at Walden Pond, writings/philosophy, profound influence on world leaders, conservation movement)
 - Walden Pond as place (geological history)
- Audience
 - School/educational groups is primary audience
 - Out-of-state/international visitors common

Examples of DCR Visitor Centers

Heritage State Parks

- Designed/constructed by Department of Environmental Management in the 1980s/1990s
- Several HSPs exist around state
- Highlight cultural/historical resources of Commonwealth
- Many HSPs are destinations by themselves, others complement adjacent parkland

Western Gateway Heritage State Park (Adams)



Examples of DCR Visitor Centers

Breakheart Reservation (Saugus)



Provide amenities for public that encourage casual social interactions (kitchen, couches with fireplace)

Dunn Pond State Park (Gardner)



Intended to complement park experience

Examples of DCR Visitor Centers

Boston Harbor Islands – Spectacle Island



Symbol of Boston Harbor's recovery and reclamation

Produces renewable energy for facility use (space includes caretaker residence)



Provides amenities that facilitate interaction with scenic and recreational resources

Examples of DCR Visitor Centers

Blue Hills Trailside Museum

- Interpretive center for DCR's Blue Hills Reservation
- Operated by Mass Audubon, under a Memorandum of Understanding with DCR
- Uses include indoor interpretive center, outdoor museum nature center, meeting space, gift shop, picnic area



Building Examples



*Polly Hill Arboretum
West Tisbury, MA*

Building Examples



*Doyle Conservation Center
Leominster, MA*

Building Examples



*Breakheart Reservation
Saugus, MA*

Building Examples



Armstrong Redwoods State Park, CA
Image Credit: Lindsey Dillon



Arnold Arboretum



Myles Standish State Forest

*Integration of
Outdoor Space*

Conceptual DCR Needs – Visitor Center

Character/Scope

- Sensitivity to context, environmentally sensitive design

Visitor Needs

- Classroom/gallery space
- Interpretive materials
- Outdoor meeting space
- Orientation materials/displays, bathrooms

Operational Needs

- Co-locate park headquarters building?
- Office space, lunch room/kitchenette for seasonal staff
- Meeting space

Discussion

- What should be the defining features of the Walden visitor experience?
- A Visitor Center at Walden....
 - What Should It Communicate?
 - How Might It Communicate These Elements?
 - Who Should It Be Intended to Serve?
 - Geared towards the local swim crowd, tourists from afar, both?
 - How Is It Most Likely To Be Used?

Discussion

- What should affect the design of a new visitor center?

Area Resources

- What similar resources are located in the Concord/Lincoln area?
- What should be emphasized at Walden that is not addressed in these other locations?

Visibility

- Should the pond be visible from a visitor center?
- Should a visitor center be visible from the pond?

Attraction

- Should a visitor center be a destination unto itself?

Other?

Additional Information

For more information please visit the DCR web site:

<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/news/publicmeetings/rmppast.htm>

If you have comments or suggestions:

Email: dcr.updates@state.ma.us (please note
“Walden” in email subject line)

Write: Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Public Outreach
251 Causeway Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Note: Public comments submitted to DCR by email or letter will be posted on the DCR website in their entirety