

Henry Lee

June 3, 2011

617-495-1350
henry_lee@harvard.edu
79 John F. Kennedy Street, Box 84
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Representative Brian S. Dempsey
Representative Stephen Kulik
Representative Viriato deMacedo
Senator Stephen M. Brewer
Senator Steven Baddour
Senator Michael Knapik
Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: FY12 DCR Budget Reconciliation

Dear Budget Conferees:

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Stewardship Council, an advisory board to the Massachusetts DCR, to encourage you as members of the Budget Conference Committee to:

- i) Adopt the Senate HWM authorization amounts for all DCR account balances; and
- ii) Adopt Senator Daniel Wolf's retained revenue amendment to provide DCR with incentives to operate more efficiently and, as a result, potentially generate more revenue than anticipated under either the House or Senate budget proposal. These additional revenues would benefit both the Commonwealth and DCR's Trust account.

i) Adopt Senate Budget Amounts for All DCR Accounts

As we have communicated to both the House and Senate, DCR's budget level is at an all time low when adjusting for inflation. Just in the last three years, the agency has had to reduce its operating budget by 30% and eliminate 20% of its workforce. This precipitous decline has resulted in the agency un-staffing 9 parks, reducing services across all parks, not opening an urban park, and keeping a popular campground closed.

Even under the Senate budget proposal, additional closings and cutbacks in seasonal employment will be necessary. **The House proposal , however, will result in additional reductions in the availability of facilities, including delays in the opening of pools, closing and/or un-staffing an additional facilities including campgrounds, state forests and swimming areas, shortening the camping season, reducing police details, trash collection and rangers, and eliminating vital administrative functions .**

With the economic downturn and increased fuel prices, our parks have become the principal vacation destination for thousands of families across the state. Even implementing the Senate's budget, which provides DCR with \$1.8 million less funding than the current fiscal year, is going to put significant pressure on the agency and its staff, but the House budget levels would be devastating.

Department of Conservation and Recreation Stewardship Council

251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114-2119
617-626-1250 617-626-4449 Fax
www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship_council.htm

ii) Adopt the Senate Retained Revenue Amendment on the State Parks Account

Historically DCR's retained revenue has been capped by the legislature, allowing the agency to collect up to an authorized amount in camping fees, parking fees, etc with the balance reverting to the General Fund. Senator Wolf's amendment would permit DCR to retain the first \$5.314 million in the state parks account. The next \$3.686 million collected would revert to the General Fund, or \$0.422 million more than was generated for the General Fund in FY10. If the agency can become more efficient and collect fees above \$9 million, Senator Wolf's amendment would allow DCR to retain 70% of these additional funds and to divert them towards its Trust account. The remaining 30% would be added to the General Fund.

The effect of this amendment would not increase the DCR FY12 budget but would provide incentives to the agency to generate additional revenues under the existing fee schedules to benefit both the State's General Fund and future park maintenance obligations.

I would like to thank you for your support of DCR and its mission and ask for your help in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Henry Lee
Chairman

Cc: Senate President Therese Murray
House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo