



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
July 7, 2011
Wachusett Mountain State Reservation, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Chairman, Henry Lee, Elisa Campbell, Michael Dutton, Laura Johnson, Whitney Hatch, James Van Dyke **Excused:** Julian Agyeman, Christina Crowley, and Frank Frey

DCR Staff in Attendance: Commissioner Ed Lambert, Lisa Bishop, Peter Church, Stuart Conner, Conrad Crawford, Priscilla Geigis, Denise Morrissey, Joe Rotondo, Jason Silva

Public Attendees: Bill Boles, NEMBA - A. Richard Miller, Friends of Cochituate State Park – Jill Miller, Friends of Cochituate State Park - Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon

Attachments: *The TORNADOS of 2011 Presentation*

Chairman Henry Lee called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

Denise Morrissey, Mt. Wachusett Supervisor, welcomed the Council and gave a brief description of the facility.

Commissioner's Report –Commissioner Ed Lambert

Commissioner Lambert informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- Commissioner Lambert informed the Council of the Fall River drowning tragedy and that DCR will do a thorough internal investigation and ensure that all policies are in place for a safe recreational season.
- The Conference Committee's budget slightly increased DCR's seasonal total of \$150k, however there are decreased monies in other areas.
- Language on revenue retentions and other outside sections relating to DCR's amendments did not survive the Conference Committee. Separate legislative language pertaining to Historical Curatorship has not been reviewed; a report with final answers and numbers will be presented at the next SC meeting.
- DCR is continuing to work with the debris management issues pertaining to the tornado at Robinson State Park and Brimfield State Forest.
- The Landscape Designation public comment period will cease on August 26.
- We have had a tremendous summer season opening; in particular Lake Cochituate opened at 4:00 a.m. to facilitate the long line of campers, at 7:30 a.m. the park was at full capacity. DCR continues to deal with operational challenges.
- The Myles Standish draft plan will be presented on July 14.
- The Melnea Cass Recreation Center in Roxbury held its grand opening on Thursday, June 30.
- The Ernestina is on dry dock for repairs; the long term cost prognosis from the shipwright report should be available by the end of the month.
- Significant progress has been made on the repairs to George's Island Pier.
- The Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) has selected the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB) to receive its Achievement Award for Outstanding Use of Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds by a state recreational trails advisory committee.
 - *The Legislature recently passed language in support of Parks Unification as part of its FY12 Budget. DCR anticipates the budget and this language will be signed into law; thus completing the intent of the 2003 merger of the DEM and MDC.*
 - *Once FY 12 Budget and the Parks Unification language is signed into law and the recreation season unwinds, DCR will continue efforts toward re-organizing and re-structuring the agency to reflect a single state parks division. DCR expects this process will be seamless to the public.*

- *Moving forward during these budget restraints, DCR staff will continue to stay focused on the work for which there is tremendous passion, though we hope that funding levels will bounce back in future fiscal years. The largest challenge currently is the back-filling of any vacant but important positions across the agency.*

Committee Updates

Finance Committee, Councilor Whitney Hatch

Councilor Whitney Hatch informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- Senator Wolf will get confirmation from his colleagues as to what happened at the Conference Committee regarding the proposed retained revenue amendment. Once the Finance Committee receives the outcome, they will get together with Kevin Whalen, Director of Administration and Finance to evaluate the next approach.
- The DCR budget is unchanged at \$71m. The outcome to this budget is employment levels will remain the same, however we are unable to backfill staff. In addition, union raises of \$1m that was not budgeted will come out of the DCR budget.
 - *The Council held a brief discussion concerning how to retain revenue. Councilor Hatch will continue to pursue language for additional amendments.*

Policy and Planning Committee, Councilor Laura Johnson

Councilor Laura Johnson informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- Currently an internal review of the Middlesex Fells RMP draft is being conducted followed by a 30-day public comment period. It is expected to be reviewed by the Council in September with final approval by the Council in October, 2011.
- Currently an internal review of the Horseneck Beach RMP draft is being conducted; it will be followed by a 30-day public comment period. It is expected to be reviewed by the Council in October with final approval by the Council in November, 2011.
- A final public meeting will be held on July 14 for the Myles Standish RMP draft. It is anticipated to be reviewed by the Council in December with final approval by the Council in January, 2012.
- A number of other RMPs are in place for approval in the coming months.
 - *The Council held a brief discussion concerning thoughts to what criteria is to be used to judge key issues regarding the Middlesex Fells.*

Future Role of the Stewardship Council Committee, Councilor Michael Dutton

Councilor Dutton informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- The Council held a lengthy discussion concerning the future role of the Stewardship Council. Below are key issues discussed:
 - The optimal size of the Council (keeping the size at thirteen members or decreasing to nine).
 - Geographic distribution of members—should the requirement that five members be from the urban parks district be eliminated?
 - Should the terms of members be staggered, and if so, how might we do this going forward?
 - Should the terms remain seven years or be changed to a shorter duration such as five years?
 - Should the Council continue to meet monthly or reduce the frequency to eight times per year?
- A presentation will be prepared for the September meeting.

Special Business

Tornados of 2011 – Priscilla Geigis, Director of State Parks and Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship

- Images of Brimfield State Forest, Affected Tornado Areas, and the Tornado Response Plan were presented to the Council by Priscilla Geigis and Peter Church. *(Tornado Presentation Attached)*

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Councilor Michael Dutton, seconded by Councilor Elisa Campbell to accept the May, 2011 minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

New Business

- No New Business

Public Comment

The following constituents expressed their opinions/issues/matters to the Council:

Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon

- Ms. Ricci strongly advocates that the Stewardship Council's role in RMP oversight, involvement and approval should remain intact.

A. Richard Miller, Friends of Cochituate State Park

- Mr. Miller commented on the low budget, lack of resources and the lack of staff; he feels we are hostages at our own parks. In addition, he is very concerned about 0% waste; we need to learn more.

Bill Boles, NEMBA

- Mr. Boles summation of the meeting is that he is very impressed with what DCR does on a daily basis, the work of the Council, the award received for the Massachusetts Recreation Trails Advisory Board (special acknowledgment to Amanda Lewis for her work with the group), and DCR's response to emergencies.

Closing Comment

- No Closing Comments

Meeting Schedule

- Next meeting will be held Thursday, August 4 at Holyoke Heritage State Park.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Christina Crowley, seconded by Councilor Whitney Hatch at 3:20 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.