



**Commissioner's Report**  
**Delivered by Jennifer Norwood, Director,**  
**External Affairs and Partnerships**  
**Stewardship Council Meeting**  
Roxbury Heritage State Park | 183 Roxbury Street, Boston  
February 7, 2020 | 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## **Welcome and Brief History of Dillaway-Thomas House at Roxbury Heritage**

- Good morning, and thank you for joining me at Roxbury Heritage State Park.
- Not long ago, DCR completed a full restoration of the historic Dillaway-Thomas House at Roxbury Heritage State Park.
- And today, I'd like to highlight this historic site and the Baker-Polito Administration's efforts to preserve a significant cultural resource.
- The history of the house dates back to 1750 when Reverend Oliver Peabody began the construction of a parsonage for the First Church of Roxbury, across the street.
- During the 11-month siege of Boston in 1775, the Continental Army and Major General John Thomas used the house as a headquarters.
- It is said that General Thomas watched the Battle of Bunker Hill and the burning of Charlestown from the windows of the home.
- It is also rumored that Thomas Dawse, one of Paul Revere's Revolutionary Riders, set out on his infamous ride from the Dillaway-Thomas House.
- In 1835, Charles K. Dillaway inherited the house during his time as headmaster of Boston Latin School.
- Dillaway was an accomplished author, writing several books including the History of the Grammar School and Roman Antiquities and Ancient Mythology for Classical Schools.
- He was heavily involved in education, the church and the Boston Society of Natural History – now the Boston Museum of Science.
- To keep the legacy of General Thomas and Former Headmaster Dillaway, DCR predecessor agencies took control of Roxbury Heritage State Park in 1984 and then the Dillaway Thomas House in 1992.

- In 2015, EEA and DCR announced The Roxbury Heritage State Park (RHSP) Signature Park Project and began a community engagement process.
- The project is one of six urban park projects identified as a priority for rehabilitation.
- The goal of the projects was to help revitalize urban neighborhoods by opening up or upgrading green spaces for outdoor recreation and by rehabilitating historic community landmarks.
- In June 2018, DCR completed restoration and enhancement of the Dillaway Thomas House.
- The project included:
  - Exterior repairs to ensure that the building is watertight;
  - Restoration of historic components and appearance of the building;
  - Upgrades to the electrical systems;
  - Upgrades to interior finishes, furniture, fixtures and equipment in areas dedicated for exhibits, or for public use;
  - Creation and installation of interpretive exhibits; and,
  - Improvement of park amenities to make the landscape more inviting.
- The completion of this restoration project was a proud moment for the agency and the house continues to shine a year later.
- And just this past fall, the Dillaway-Thomas House opened to the public!
- The facility now has interpretive and educational programming for many ages and has the space to host community and school groups.
- I encourage you to explore the house and the grounds of Roxbury Heritage State Park today and appreciate the significant Massachusetts history that occurred here.

## **Public Meetings**

- With increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic on our parkways, it is incredibly important that the DCR continues to assess opportunities to improve parkway safety and expand multi-modal travel accommodations.
- With that in mind, on Tuesday, February 4th, the DCR hosted a public meeting to present design improvements for the Mount Auburn Street and Fresh Pond Parkway intersection in the City of Cambridge
- And on Tuesday, January 3rd, the DCR hosted a public meeting seeking to provide an update to improvements planned for Lynn Heritage State Park which includes a multi-use path along the Lynn waterfront expanding commuting options in the City.
- If you're interested in receiving information regarding these public meetings, please reach out to my office, and we can send you the materials and/or the presentations.

## **Partnership Matching Funds**

- Continuing efforts to support the state's vast park system, the Baker-Polito Administration announced more than \$870,000 in Partnership Matching Funds to 29 projects throughout the commonwealth.
- The program seeks to foster public-private partnerships with the people who know our state park system the best; visitors!
- The program focuses on stakeholder proposed projects and provides vital matching funds for the projects while DCR manages and oversees implementation of the project.
- This year's projects include:
  - The treatment of aquatic invasive species in various state parks;
  - The design and installation of interpretive signage at Halibut Point State Park in the Town of Rockport;
  - The implementation of a tree management and care program along the Charles River Esplanade in the City of Boston;
  - The assessment of the ruins of a castle in the City of Methuen;
  - The continued restoration of historic lamp posts along Revere Beach State Reservation in the City of Revere; and,

- The replacement of a plaque commemorating the military service of a Korean War veteran at Moynihan Park in the City of Boston.
- DCR is fortunate to have a tremendous amount of support from environmental and recreational organizations, park advocacy groups, and community supporters.
- The Baker-Polito Administration is pleased to partner with these entities in an effort that truly benefits the public for years to come.
- If you have an idea of a park improvement project, take a look at the Partnership Matching Funds website. Shortly, DCR will begin accepting project proposals for FY21.

### **Family-Friendly February**

- I would like to mention DCR's upcoming family-friendly programming for February.
- Fresh air and family fun are an excellent combination for school vacation activities.
- Children and their families' will have the opportunity to enjoy guided experiences or to create a park adventure on their own.
- The wide-ranging selection of programs include guided hikes, wildlife observation opportunities, crafting activities, games, stories, and more.
- In addition to the special school vacation week programming, DCR will continue to offer its normal recreational and interpretive programming, as well as adaptive programming through the agency's Universal Access Program.
- Lace up your skates, because public skating is also available at agency managed rinks.
- For a full list of programs, visit the DCR website.

### **Park Serve Day Approaching**

- Each year, the DCR hosts Park Serve Day, a chance for Massachusetts residents to help clean and prepare their local state parks and beaches for the summer recreation season.

- Park Serve Day shows volunteers the importance of sharing in the stewardship of our state lands, and creates a sense of community and shared commitment to the environment.
- This year, Park Serve Day will be held on April 25, 2020.
- By fostering strong partnerships with the public, friends groups, municipalities, and other stakeholders, the Baker-Polito Administration continues to effectively provide a first class parks system for all to enjoy.

## **Closing**

- As you may know, DCR Acting Commissioner Montgomery has been named Commissioner of DCR.
- DCR is excited to have Commissioner Montgomery at the helm of our diverse agency as we seek to protect, preserve and enhance our state parks system.
- I am confident, the Commissioner will have the distinct pleasure of joining a stewardship council meeting in the coming months.
- And now, I want to thank you for joining me today, it has been a pleasure speaking to you.