



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
Friday, January 11, 2019 | 10A to 12P
Dunn Pond State Park
286 Pearl Street, Gardner, MA

January Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Heather Clish, Michele Hanss, Whitney Hatch, Vivian Ortiz, Alvin L. Reynolds, Jr., Dennis Smith, Nate Walton

Council Members Not Present: Melissa Harper, David Murphy

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Stuart Connor, Stephen Doody, Brad Gallant, Joe Rotondo, Jennifer Stowe

Public Attendees (and stated affiliation): No visitor sign-ins

Welcome and Call to Meeting

Chairman Hatch welcomed council members and guests. Noted we have gained and lost some council members since last meeting. Kate Sharry took on a new assignment and has stepped off. Ann Canedy has joined the Council and should be in attendance at the next meeting. He noted the term ending of Elisa Campbell saying there was no stronger proponent of DCR than Councilor Campbell. Her attendance at Council meetings and public meetings especially in the Pioneer Valley was stellar. Her contributions to the Council were many, and he extended his sincere gratitude for her years of service.

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Roy offered a brief note of history on Dunn State Park. In 1915, the land was gifted to the City of Gardner by woodworking connoisseur and manufacturing heavyweight John Ainsworth Dunn. Over the years, Dunn Park has expanded to its current 120 acres under state management with a 20 acre pond, universally accessible trail, playground, beach, and picnic area for visitors of all abilities to enjoy.

Park Supervisor Brad Gallant thought a pavilion here would be an excellent idea and it was. It's a great example of employees throughout the agency continuously working to improve the visitor experience. Today the pavilion is host to an adaptive skating program, as it transforms into an ice rink in the winter months.

Before this meeting we invited DCR staff of the Central Region for what we call Coffee with the Commissioner, which I do before most Stewardship meetings to engage with our people over coffee (purchased by Commissioner Roy) across the state. It's one-on-one time to answer questions such as why do we do this or that? Is there some rule or tax implication? It's a very helpful exchange to have things explained about the agency directly by its commissioner.

Public Meetings

- With increased traffic on our parkways, it is incredibly important that the DCR continues to assess opportunities to make them safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. With that in mind, on Tuesday, December 18, the DCR attended a MassDOT public meeting seeking to receive public feedback on design proposals and for improved pedestrian and bicycle access along Charles River Dam Bridge and Road.
- On Wednesday, December 12, the DCR attended a City of Somerville public meeting seeking to gather public feedback for the proposed field improvements at the popular Foss Park. State parks equipped with sports fields have seen a steady increase in visitor activity and recreational usage by local communities and sports teams. DCR continues evaluating opportunities to improve our urban fields that get continuous use.

First Day Hikes

On New Year's Day, DCR hosted 12 guided First Day Hikes. Nearly 4,000 visitors across the Commonwealth attended the guided hikes. Twenty-eight years ago, DCR established First Day Hikes and now they are held in all 50 states and some Canadian provinces, demonstrating how state parks are an important source of year-round recreation.

Chainsaw Safety Training

In December, through the DCR Chainsaw Safety Initiative, the agency invested over \$100,000 to train and certify 240 employees in using chainsaws safely and with greater expertise. Thirteen training sessions were held state wide. Commissioner Roy participated and now is certified in chainsaw safety.

Schooner Ernestina

- The Baker-Polito Administration recognizes the importance of not only protecting, but also preserving the wealth of American history in Massachusetts. One of the many treasures of Massachusetts, the Schooner Ernestina Morrissey, had undergone a tremendous restoration and rebuilding effort under the guidance of master shipwrights in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.
- The builders recently reached a significant milestone. The ceremonial final plank, known by ship builders as the "shutter plank," was clamped and pounded into place, continuing DCR's efforts to restore Schooner Ernestina Morrissey to sailing condition with a goal of joining in

the Parade of Sail as part of Plymouth's 2020 Celebration. Additionally, the DCR is trying to move the ship to the better suited Massachusetts Maritime Academy and is working with them and the legislature for the transfer.

Cambridge-Watertown Greenway Groundbreaking

The DCR continues to enhance the pedestrian, and bicyclist experience on our trails and greenways, and we recently broke ground on the new Watertown – Cambridge Greenway. The joint project among MassDOT, the City of Cambridge and the DCR was launched in 2013 with the purchase of the former B&M Railroad Line. The new greenway will provide an off-road link between the Minuteman Bikeway, the Mystic River Reservation, and the Charles River Reservation, officially connecting the most heavily used greenways in the Boston Metropolitan region, with the benefits of getting people out of their cars for off road exercise.

Crossing Guard Pay Raise

When the MDC was folded into DCR, we ended up with crossing guards as a result of our parkways in such close proximity to schools and daycare centers. Recently, the agency has stepped up our efforts to recruit crossing guards, an essential job for pedestrian safety, but one that is particularly hard to fill due to the limited hours. DCR is considering raising the pay for this job to make it more attractive. Commissioner Roy met with a group of municipalities last year to take on the daily management of the guards, with DCR paying for it. But municipalities don't want to manage this either so it remains a real challenge.

2019 Lifeguard Recruitment Efforts

- While in the middle of winter, we're focused on pools and waterfronts for lifeguard recruitment. DCR recruits, trains and certifies upwards of 700 lifeguards. We hired a social media consultant to help us with recruitment outreach, and we increased the wage to \$15 per hour. Commissioner Roy noted the very important responsibility of these guards and the difficulty of the job. For so many of our urban pools, this is the only summer vacation that neighborhood youngsters have.
- DCR also is reaching out to a new target group, retirees and teachers, to help us extend our season when our student lifeguards return to school early for athletics.

Park Serve Day Approaching

- Each year, the DCR hosts Park Serve Day, a chance for Massachusetts residents to help clean and beautify 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 27, 2019](#).

- 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.

Commissioner Roy officially welcome the Stewardship Council to the new year 2019 and noted the important work the Council does on DCR's behalf and will continue to do in the coming year.

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Commissioner Q&A

Councilor Reynolds asked Commissioner Roy about the type of turf being used at DCR Parks.

Commissioner Roy explained that our partnership with Simmons College for Daly Field in Brighton was our first artificial turf field and they are responsible for its maintenance. It has an older generation of artificial turf or crumb rubber requiring specialized maintenance. A new generation material is coconut husk but a round sand base provides the environmental benefits without the maintenance challenges of coconut husk.

Foss Park in Somerville and Lake Park in Worcester are both fields with virtually constant use. Suburban fields can get rest while urban fields don't have that downtime so the best choice is artificial turf.

Commissioner Roy added that these are scheduled fields. From Pop Warner, to South American soccer teams and everyone in between. A certain portion of the day is scheduled and there is open time available for parents and kids to have a pick-up game. As a state parks agency, we have to accommodate everyone.

Councilor Hanss asked if DCR was consulted on the MassDOT revision of the I-90 viaduct project at the Mass. Turnpike and Storrow Drive/Soldier's Field Road in Brighton.

Commissioner Roy said DCR has been very involved with the process and is very pleased with Secretary Pollack's decision to provide a path with a better experience with a little bit more elbow room. He noted that the viaduct is structurally deficient and that is much cheaper to build a viaduct for a road, like Soldier's Field Road than on and interstate highway like I-90.

Councilor Hanss also asked if DCR was impacted by the federal shutdown. Commissioner Roy said DCR has active work with the Coast Guard and the Forest Service so some meetings are not happening. A First Day Hike to the Bunker Hill Monument involved the National Park Service and that caused DCR to make some last minute changes to allow the Hike to go forward without compromise thanks to Lisa Barstow. DCR has offered our resources to keep areas of the City of Boston clean.

Chairman Hatch asked Commissioner Roy what is the number of lifeguards over the number of waterfronts. Commissioner Roy said we would like a full complement of 700 but typically hire

approximately 630. DCR has 40 pools and 40 inland lakes and ponds and the lifeguard qualifications there are very different than coastal guards like at Salisbury Beach.

Councilor Reynolds asked what type of liability are we taking on managing waterfronts.

Commissioner Roy said we don't charge a fee so there is a recreational use exemption from liability. We have three to six drownings per year but most occur after hours in areas outside our guarded areas. He said anytime someone loses a loved one, it's tragic and we are a litigious society. However, we are not going to stop serving waterfronts, it's an important part of our mission.

Commissioner Roy recalled some years ago, there was an awful drowning in Fall River; as a result, DCR completely revamped its program. "Today, I would put our program up against any in the country," said Commissioner Roy.

Councilor Smith said he was intrigued by retirees as lifeguards and thought councils on aging would be places Council members could pass that information on to our communities.

Commissioner Roy said we work with YMCA swim coaches and we are developing a targeted flyer for senior centers and can provide flyers to the Council.

Councilor Reynolds asked if there are there incentives DCR offers.

Commissioner Roy said it is a well-paying job, a challenging job, and as part of the job they are First Responder trained, and CPR trained, DCR pays for their training.

Councilor Clish noted that each year DCR lifeguards make frequent saves.

Commissioner Roy said we try to do an annual event at the State House with the Governor, Secretary Beaton and legislators recognizing those guards who make saves.

Chairman Hatch said he had been to those and it's a really wonderful event.

Councilor Ortiz asked if the season is Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Commissioner Roy said we have a staggered program, opening waterfronts on weekends and opening daily by Father's Day. By the third week in August we lose our lifeguards who return to school early for athletic programs. Our pool season is nine to ten weeks. We close certain waterfronts and drive guards to others. This year to hope the retirees will help close that gap.

Councilor Walton asked if the Longfellow Bridge is a DCR bridge. Commissioner Roy explained that originally it was but about eight years ago it went to DOT. However, DOT asked DCR to do the snow removal. There were a number of conversations about the challenges of flexposts. Because DOT made a commitment to the flexposts, they have now taken on the snow removal responsibly. DCR manages some 600 miles of snow routes and is very familiar with the challenges of snow removal.

Committee Updates

Policy Committee

Chairman Hatch said he will be managing the Policy Committee with Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis and the planning staff until we go through a planned orientation session in February. He explained that the Stewardship Council has responsibility for reviewing the Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Landscape Designations. He noted the RMPs in the packets that have been adopted by the Stewardship Council and the ones yet to be done.

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chairman Councilor Clish said she expects the release of the Governor's budget on January 23. We would review and see what input the Council would like to give to legislative process.

Chairman Hatch noted that with many new members there is a need to revisit committee structures but that there is certainly a need for a Finance Committee. Councilors Walton and Murphy are serving [with Councilor and Finance Committee Chairman Heather Clish] and if new councilors Ortiz or Reynolds are interested in serving, to please let him know.

Councilor Clish noted that the Finance Committee is well-supported by the advocacy community. DCR funding is a priority for the Green Budget Coalition and they host an annual a lobby day.

Chairman Hatch said that while the Commissioner is constrained to support the Governor's budget, we are not so constrained.

Chairman Hatch introduced Peter Church, Director of Bureau of Forestry and Forest Fire Control

Special Business I

Overview of Bureau of Forestry and Forest Fire Control, and genesis and specifics of DCR landscape designations; presented by Peter Church, Director, Bureau of Forestry and Forest Fire Control - presentation available online at www.mass.gov/dcr (search Stewardship Council).

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Special Business Q&A

Chairman Hatch asked what percentage of acreage is in each one of the three categories of woodlands, parklands and reserves.

Mr. Church replied approximately 60 percent reserves and parklands and 40 percent in woodlands.

Chairman Hatch asked if you were to summarize the different forestry activities among the three designations, what forestry activities would be different.

Mr. Church said we do forest management on all three. For example, Myles Standish is a reserve and a property that needs management due to the public safety threat of forest fires. We had about 400 acres of Red Pine plantations that were dying and needed to be removed. We went to the Forest Reserve Science Advisory Council and they agreed. So we put forth a timber sale contract to have them removed. In woodlands, there can be an objective from a monetary standpoint. We could generate wood products from woodlands but not from parklands or reserves.

Councilor Clish Heather asked how you go about balancing or rebalancing needs in the woodlands to increase carbon stock.

Mr. Church said that a lot of that has to do with the foresters on the ground specific to sites. We may designate an area as woodland that has a reserve within that we will never manage. It all depends on specific locations.

Ms. Clish asked for what is the right timeframe, 10, 20, 30 years, to observe the results of your managing.

Mr. Church said that DCR foresters across the state monitor over 2,000 Continuous Forest Inventory Plots. They are in parklands, woodlands and reserves. We measure regeneration, mortality, etc. What we're working with our Forest Reserve Science Advisory Council on a more robust monitoring process within a reserve and outside a reserve. Watching the management in woodlands vs. what we're not doing in a reserve. We're still trying to develop our criteria and we're not there yet. What we already do is very good. But we're trying to figure out other forest health hazards.

Ms. Hanss asked if there was a way for the public, like hikers, to monitor of the forest conditions.

Mr. Church said, "Certainly." We encourage people, if they see something that we may miss, to report that, to become citizen scientists for us.

Chairman Hatch said he recalls this process came about because of collision of recreation interests and forest interests.

Mr. Church agreed and added that there are those who oppose active forest management. He said that the collision has been resolved and said when DCR puts forward a forest management plan, we have a public process. We work with [expert] stakeholders in particular areas and talk about our projects that may impact them.

Councilor Ortiz questioned about the Blue Hills deer overpopulation.

Mr. Church said in the Resource Management Plan for the Blue Hills one of the recommendations was to assess the deer population. Anecdotal evidence was too many deer in this 7,000 acre inland oasis with no predators for deer. It was impacting the next generation of trees, the mature trees.

We did a study with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and found 80 deer per square mile when 15 is the norm. We instituted a managed deer hunt. We permitted shotgun and archery hunting for a limited number of days. We did it in the coldest, lowest recreation time of year. We have done this for the past four years. We have the deer density down, and we want to get to a maintenance level of approximately 15 deer per square mile.

Chairman Hatch asked for an update on the last deer hunt activities and statistics for the next meeting.

Special Business II - MOU on Friends Groups

Chairman Hatch shared on a process driven by DCR's Jenny Norwood to assemble a small task force with representatives of the Friends Groups and the Stewardship Council along with DCR staff to resolve how Friends Groups may operate on DCR properties and what legislative changes may be needed. Councilors Michele Hanss and Nate Walton agreed to assist.

Special Business III – Curatorship Issue

Chairman Hatch updated the Council on the letter that was sent to the legislature urging that curators of DCR property not be assessed local property tax as they do not have equity in the property. Councilor Clish assisted in getting it to legislators. Fortunately, the amendment never went forward last session. Senator Tarr has agreed to refile a clean, simple bill next session.

Chairman Hatch brought attention to the sheet of upcoming agenda items in the packet before them for discussion, noting the next meeting will be an orientation session on February 8, 2019.

Commissioner Roy suggested that meeting be at least four hours and proposed to do this in the new Worcester Visitor Center.

Councilor Smith added that Councilors are entitled to a lunch reimbursement so perhaps a sandwich lunch could be built-in and a break for conversation.

Chairman Hatch referred back to agenda items for the year including a discussion on Parkways and to share ideas about timing with Lisa [Barstow] and Stephen [Doody] recognizing that scheduling is dependent on availability of DCR staff and other presenters.

Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith moved to approve the minutes of the December meeting, the motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

Public Comment

Bill Copeland identified himself as a physician and landowner from Northfield, MA. He encouraged the Stewardship Council to take their role seriously. He suggested that we face a “Triple Threat” of biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change and these should be considered in any stewardship plan. He said regarding controversial issues such as Wendell State Forest he believes local decision making is better and the local residents would not want to, “cut that forest;” that it should be kept intact. He asked if the 40 percent woodland ratio means that woodlands are expected to pay for themselves.

Mr. Church answered that there is no correlation between reaching 40 percent woodland and income generation. All the management we do is for the improvement of that forest.

Dr. Copeland asked if it would be possible to keep big machinery out of the forest.

Mr. Church said it all depends on what a particular harvesting proposal is asking for. There may be a project that is very small or there may be other reasons why we do a larger timber harvest. Our ultimate goal is to get to that diverse, different age, different species forest.

Dr. Copeland said the ten-year review is coming up in a few years, and asked if it would be possible for some woodlands to become reserves?

Mr. Church said we look holistically at everything, confirming that woodlands can become reserves and reserves to woodlands in response to an additional question by Dr. Copeland.

Dr. Copeland said he hopes to become a more engaged participant.

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Chairman Hatch asked for a motion to adjourn; it was answered unanimously and seconded unanimously, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 2:07 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center, 3 Paul Clancy Way, Worcester from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.