

Partnering with DCR

Presentation to the DCR Stewardship Council

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Who We Are

- ▶ Laura Jasinski, Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy



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The Charles River Conservancy



- ▶ Founded: 2000
- ▶ Employees: 5 FTE + 1 Co-op
- ▶ Annual Budget: \$750,000
- ▶ Mission:
 - ▶ The Charles River Conservancy lies at the center of the Charles **River, its parks, and the park's users. We similarly envision a** future in which the Charles River and its parks are celebrated, well-utilized, and connected centers of public life.
 - ▶ The Conservancy works with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to make the Charles River and its parks a well-maintained network of natural urban places that invite and engage all in their use and stewardship.

The Esplanade Association



- ▶ Founded: 2001
- ▶ Employees: 11 FTEs + 4 seasonals
- ▶ Annual Budget: \$2 million
- ▶ Mission:
 - ▶ The Esplanade Association is a nonprofit organization that works to revitalize and enhance the Charles River Esplanade, sustain its natural green space, and build community in the park by providing educational, cultural, and recreational programs for everyone.
 - ▶ Working in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Esplanade Association is dedicated to improving the experiences of the millions of visitors **who enjoy Boston's iconic riverside park.**

Snapshot of DCR Partner Groups

- ▶ DCR currently partners with 120+ groups statewide
- ▶ Organizations vary widely:
 - ▶ One-person groups to national organizations with 250,000+ members
 - ▶ All-volunteer groups to those with paid staff
 - ▶ Groups with no budget to those with multi-million dollar annual budgets
 - ▶ Advocacy groups, programming groups, operating groups, conservatory groups, environmental stewards, neighborhood groups, special/single interest groups, etc.
 - ▶ Volunteer associations to those with 501(c)(3) tax status
 - ▶ Informal relationship with DCR to formal/legal relationship with DCR (via MOUs, informal agreements, etc.)

Common Roles Played by DCR Partner Groups

- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Programming
- ▶ Operations & Care of Facilities, Parks, Places, and/or Amenities
- ▶ Capital Planning, Restoration, and/or Improvement
- ▶ Volunteer Coordination
- ▶ Fundraising / Earned Income Support

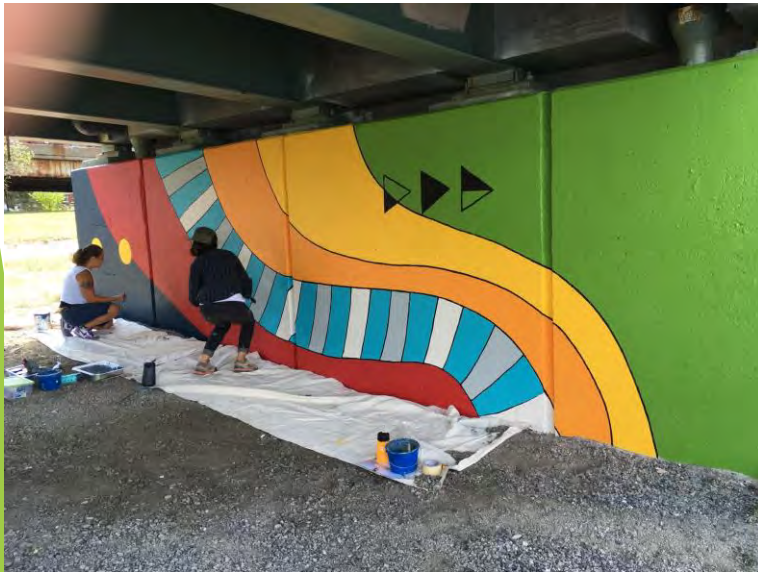
Serving as Advocates for DCR and Our Shared Public Spaces

- ▶ **Supporting DCR's budget during legislative budget process**
- ▶ Advocating for specific legislative capital projects & bond expenditures
 - ▶ Docks, playgrounds, boathouses, pedestrian bridges, etc.
- ▶ Fighting to clean up the state waterways
- ▶ Campaigning in support of the Community Preservation Act
- ▶ Ensuring DCR property is protected and improved in major infrastructure projects



Producing Diverse Programming to Increase Use of Public Spaces & Build Community

- ▶ Host, Fund, and Produce free concerts, movie nights, swims, fitness classes, hikes, tours
- ▶ Commission public art installations and enlivening public exhibits
- ▶ **Create and Manage children's programs, universal access programs, and those that focus on serving under-resourced communities**



Producing Diverse Programming to Increase Use of Public Spaces & Build Community



Leading the Coordination of Volunteer Efforts to Maintain Our Parks

- ▶ Source, train, equip, supervise, acknowledge volunteers in supporting cleanliness and beautification efforts
- ▶ Leverage millions in donated labor to complete major improvements



Sharing Responsibility for Operating & Caring-For State Facilities, Parks, Places, and/or Amenities

- ▶ Funding staff, equipment, tools, and materials to operate and maintain state assets and lands around the state
- ▶ Provide horticultural care and restoration, day-to-day maintenance, environmental stewardship, beautification, trash removal, and more

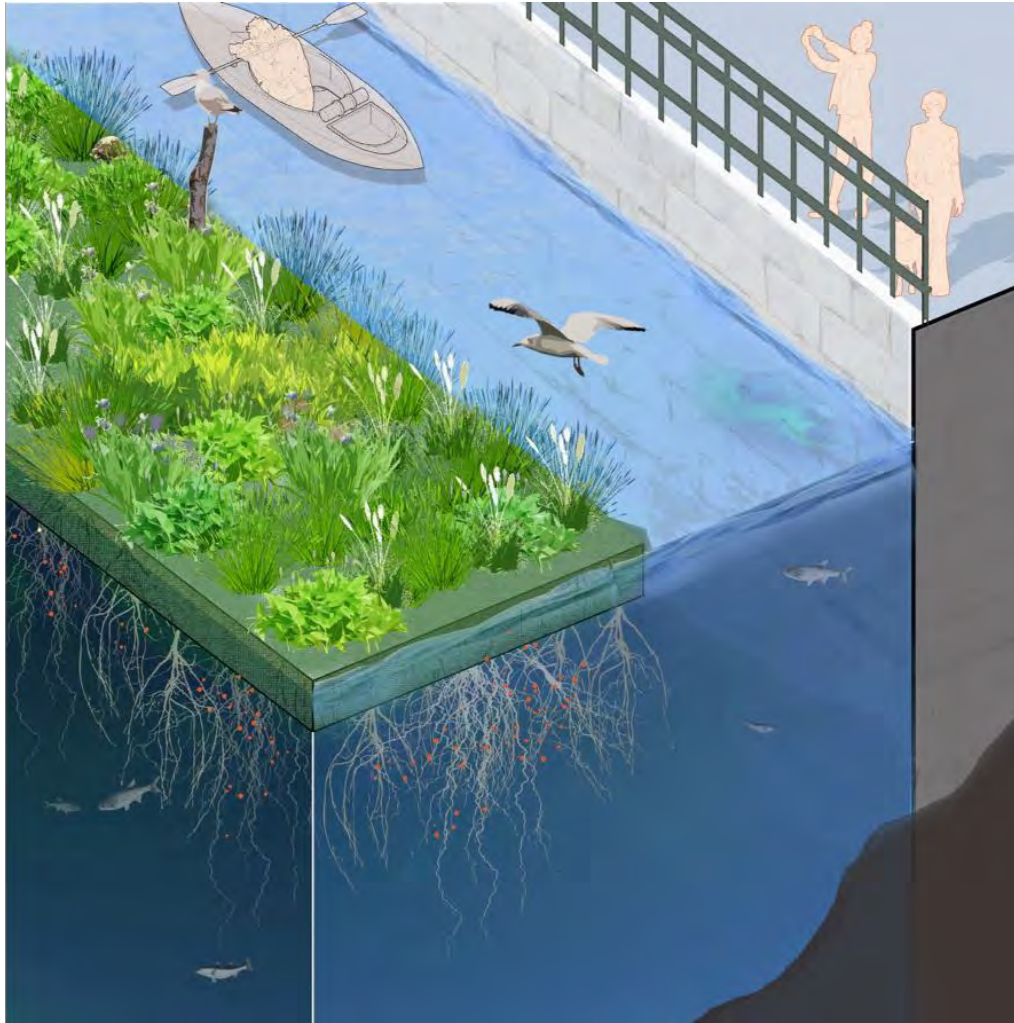


Initiating, Funding, and Completing Capital Planning, Restoration, and Improvement Projects

- ▶ Lead and Fund Capital Planning efforts
 - ▶ Invasive Species Management, Pathway Safety, Interpretive Services, Tree Canopy Restoration, Park Master Plan, etc.
- ▶ Restore historic monuments, memorials, and park elements
- ▶ Support construction of new amenities:
 - ▶ Skate Parks
 - ▶ Playgrounds
 - ▶ Wayfinding Signs
 - ▶ Sports Fields
 - ▶ *Proposed* Floating Wetland Pilot
 - ▶ *Proposed* Esplanade Riverfront Pavilion



Initiating, Funding, and Completing Capital Planning, Restoration, and Improvement Projects



Initiating, Funding, and Completing Capital Planning, Restoration, and Improvement Projects



Directing private funds and sourcing earned income ideas to support DCR and its parks

- ▶ Partner groups collectively put millions of dollars back into DCR parks and facilities each year
- ▶ Partner groups also often identify revenue opportunities that can directly benefit DCR & DCR parks, including:
 - ▶ food & beverage concessions
 - ▶ park asset sponsorship
 - ▶ sports field/court/ice rentals
 - ▶ and more...



DCR has made strides to support and welcome partnership around the Commonwealth

- ▶ Staff position dedicated to partnership groups - Jenny Norwood
- ▶ Partnerships Matching Funds Program
- ▶ Historic Curatorship Program
- ▶ Day-to-day operational coordination
- ▶ Close coordination on capital projects



Though some **structural challenges persist...**

- ▶ DCR Budget Constraints
 - ▶ Relatively flat over many years
 - ▶ Increased responsibility to earn statewide budget via local revenue opportunities
- ▶ DCR Under-Staffed in Key Areas
 - ▶ Legal
 - ▶ Permitting
 - ▶ Partnerships
 - ▶ Operations
 - ▶ Specialty Roles - Arborist, Ecologist, Playground Planner
- ▶ The aggregate effect is that it takes a long time to achieve progress and complete projects while limiting opportunities to improve and activate public spaces

In Summary... Partner Groups Expand DCR's Capacity to Fulfill Its Mission... *and Want to Help A Lot More*

- ▶ Partner groups provide tens of millions of dollars annually in direct **support to DCR's mission through capital, operating, and earned revenue support**
- ▶ Partner groups advocate for public spaces and DCR itself, while producing programming that enlivens public spaces
- ▶ The positive impact of partner groups is most limited by **DCR's staffing limits and resources itself.**
- ▶ Investments made in positioning the agency to capitalize **on partner group's resources and expertise would have a catalyzing positive effect on our public spaces.**

