

**Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis Talking Points
Stewardship Council | Friday, October 11, 2019
180 Beaman Street, West Boylston, MA, 01583**

Welcome

- Good morning and welcome to DCR's Water Supply Protection Headquarters, a place where the dedicated and talented DCR staff do important work for the Commonwealth.
- As you may know, Commissioner Leo Roy has retired after three years of distinguished leadership at DCR. [Additional personal reflections on his service were expressed.]

Camping Season Comes to a Close

- This summer, DCR had a successful camping season with campers from all walks of life descending on state parks to enjoy the recreational opportunities our public lands have to offer.
- As the cold weather comes, state campgrounds will be seeing their last visitors and beginning off-season operations.

Ice Rinks Opening

- As one season ends, another begins. Many of our ice skating rinks have opened for the fall and winter. All DCR rinks will be open by Thanksgiving with public skating dates and times posted soon after.

Public Meetings

- With increased interest in outdoor play, it is incredibly important that the DCR continues to assess opportunities to make our facilities better for children and families.
- With that in mind, on Monday, September 30th, the DCR hosted a public meeting seeking to provide an improved playground experience at Pope John Paul II Park within the Neponset River Reservation in Boston.
 - DCR has proposed a reconstruction of the Pope John Paul II Park Playground equipped with new play equipment, site amenities, and more.
- And on Tuesday, September 17th, the DCR will hosted a public meeting to give the Town of Rockport community an update on improvements to Halibut Point State Park.
 - DCR has proposed visitor center renovations, with new exhibits, and landscape design plans.
- 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.

Neponset River Bike Path Award

- Speaking of DCR's Neponset River Reservation, I'd like to mention a notable achievement announced in September.
- The Neponset River has been honored as one of the six Great Places in America in 2019 by the American Planning Association.
- The American Planning Association does this to recognize communities that have created spaces that exemplify healthy revitalization, support cultural identity, and foster community.
- It is a great honor to receive this award.
- I just want to say thank you to the DCR staff who work incredibly hard to make sure the public receives a great experience within our state parks.
- DCR can do great work because of our great staff.

Harbor Walks

- I encourage you to get outdoors this autumn and visit the Neponset River Bike Path or another DCR Park.
- If a guided tour piques your interest, I recommend attending one of Boston Harbor Now's Harbor Walks.
- Boston Harbor Now is conducting a series of walks to celebrate the Boston Harbor Walk's 35th anniversary.
- I participated in the first walk this weekend that started at the Neponset River Reservation and ended at Carson Beach. We saw several DCR properties along the way.
- It was a vivid reminder of how DCR helps provide access for people to enjoy the coastline and recreational facilities like playgrounds, ballfields and beaches.

Opening of Paul Revere Park Playground

- Recently, DCR completed the reconstruction of the Paul Revere Park Playground in the City of Boston.
- The \$450,000 project relocated the playground to accommodate the Massachusetts Department of Transportation North Washington Bridge replacement Project.
- The playground features new surfacing, gated fencing, and play equipment for 2-5 and 5-12 year olds.
- Additionally, the playground has new benches, and landscape work.
- DCR and the Baker-Polito Administration are pleased to continue to support the community by making significant improvements to playgrounds.

Go Green on Black Friday

- I am pleased to say the DCR's annual "Go Green on Black Friday" campaign is next month. All parklands will be open for the holiday and many state parks will host guided hikes.
- Details of Go Green hikes will be available in the coming weeks as the holiday approaches.
- The Baker-Polito administration is proud to offer new and creative ways for residents to experience the outdoors. "Go Green" hikes are a wonderful way for visitors to enjoy a hike after Thanksgiving traditions as an alternative to joining the Black Friday crowds.

Head of the Charles Regatta

- The 55th annual Head of the Charles Regatta is on the horizon. The festivities begin Friday, October 18, as athletes take to the waters of the Charles River to practice the course. Competition kicks off Saturday and goes until Sunday evening.
- The popular athletic spectacle attracts over 100,000 spectators to DCR's Charles River banks and occupies state land from the Boston University Bridge to Artesani Park.
- In preparation, DCR operations is working hard to ready the park grounds with the intention of giving athletes and visitors the best possible experience while preserving the health of the reservation.
- DCR is working closely with MSP to ensure the safety and security of all throughout the weekend.
- The Head of the Charles is a great tradition that encourages many to visit the state lands during a beautiful time of year.

Blue Hills Deer Hunt

- The DCR continues to consider best practices for agency management plans in many areas.
- In consultation with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, DCR announced the 2019 Blue Hills Deer Management Plan.
- DCR and MassWildlife will implement a controlled hunting plan in 2019 that enhances the archery hunt while reducing the number of days and acres included in the shotgun hunt.
- Similar to last year, the 2019 plan features two phases of hunting in the reservation, including permitted archery hunting in designated areas of the reservation during the month of November and a two-day shotgun hunt in early December.
- In addition, while 1,616 acres have been removed from the shotgun hunt, this area has been added to the archery hunt.
- All areas included in this year's hunts have already been opened to either shotgun or archery hunting in prior years.

- As you may know, under legislative mandate, DCR is required to implement a management plan where deer overpopulation is negatively impacting forests, water resources, or plant growth on department owned land.
- The agency expects to expand hunting to Quabbin Park and Sudbury watershed lands, and will continue Quabbin Reservoir and Wachusett Reservoir watershed land deer hunts.

Drought Management Plan

- I'd like to mention another relevant management plan, the DCR's Drought Management Plan.
- Water Resources staff, who are the staff to the Commonwealth Water Resources Commission have completed a re-write of the state's Drought Management Plan, which was adopted by the Commission in August.
- The plan includes revised drought indices which will allow better reporting of conditions to expected to result in more responsive actions.
- The Baker-Polito Administration and DCR recognize the importance of preparedness and continue to make strides to complete and adopt management plans for what may come our way.

Snow and Ice Prep

- Lastly, I would like to mention the preparations DCR is conducting ahead of this winter weather season.
- The DCR snow and ice fleet will be ready for the 2019/2020 storms! Each asset receives a 90 point inspection and many see preventative maintenance actions.
- Salt sheds will be receiving shipments and additional salt orders and deliveries are occurring over the next few weeks.
- DCR is working with all of our state and local partners to best serve each region of the commonwealth through winter weather events

Closing

- As stewards of 450,000 acres of parkland that consists of park, forests, beaches, bicycle and hiking trails, we are proud of the work of our staff, and are happy to share the latest happenings with you today.
- Thank you for joining us!