



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
July 12, 2018 | 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Great Falls Discovery Center
2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

July Meeting Minutes

Council Members present: Elisa Campbell, Melissa Harper, Marianne Hartmann, Michele Hanss, Whitney Hatch, Wayne Klockner, and Dennis Smith

Council Members not present: Heather Clish, Jim Van Dyke, David C. Murphy, Toni Pollak and Nate Walton

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Stephen Doody, Alec Gilman, Janel Nockleby, Joe Rotondo, Commissioner Leo Roy, and Dominick Sacco

Public Attendees (and stated affiliation): Bill Copeland, Mission Ridge; Lisa Hoag, Wendell Historical Commission; Richard Starfursky, Species Forest Inc., Brattleboro, VT; Susan Starfursky, Species Forest Inc.; Bill Bowles, New England Mountain Bike Association and Friends of Wompatuck; Henry Woolsey, MA Conservation Votes; Don Ogden, enviroshow@vasserfreeradio.org; Steven Ward, state resident.

Welcome and Call to Meeting

Chairman Whitney Hatch called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

Chairman Hatch welcomed newly-appointed Councilors Melissa Harper and Marianne Hartmann. Chairman Hatch also thanked former Councilor Walter Bickford for his dedicated service and commitment to DCR forestry initiatives, advocacy for properly managing invasive species and a tiger in promoting rail trail development in a streamlined manner. Chairman Hatch has asked Walter to work on an agenda with the Fish and Wildlife Board on common areas between agencies and a potential meeting with them.

He wants to continue to work on areas of particular personal interest including internal and external communications monitoring, as reported on at the last meeting.

Commissioner's Report

- Series of public meetings on increased bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on our parkways and monitoring safety of our 1,700 intersections. He said that we were putting Day Boulevard in South Boston on a road diet.
- A study funded by Harvard University is underway to improve pedestrian and bicycle access in the Charles River Reservation along Soldiers Field Road to Artesani Park.
- We had over 2,000 submissions on DCR's Annual Arbor Day Poster Contest of fifth graders across the state. Fourteen posters made short list and along with awarding our winners.
- DCR has been (re)building bridges including the Thompson footbridge in Watertown, a steep bridge, not ADA accessible. The new bridge is flatter and accessible and crosses Charles River and ends near a DCR pool.
- DCR entered into an MOU for companies to apply to test autonomous vehicles in Boston, another opportunity for the Baker-Polito administration to lead in technology.
- Much improvement to Magazine Beach. Celebrating 200th anniversary of the Powder Magazine – a place where one could safely store their gun power at that time. Also added a new spray deck and constructing a new boat launch plus other improvements demonstrating the Administration's investment in recreation.
- Opened new, resilient Salisbury Beach Reservation comfort station built to deal with climate change.
- During the Fourth of July, DCR participates in five celebrations, with Boston getting the most press. Proud of the swift clean up by staff.
- Celebrating Melnea A. Cass Recreational Complex 50th Anniversary with a variety of activities. Opened a new spray deck augmenting the Olympic-sized pool.
- Kicked-off Fourth Annual Summer Nights program at a ceremony with Governor Baker, program providers and a number of elected officials. Summer Nights was launched by Governor Baker to provide a variety of safe recreational opportunities for urban youth particularly during evening hours. Programs include dance, flag football, basketball, arts and crafts and more—many programs have food associated with them. This year we have a record of offering more than 13 programs spanning the state.
 - DCR has continued its extended hours in our pools and spray decks in urban areas, as part of Summer Nights program, to enhance safe recreational activities for youth and families.
- We are a four-season agency, but summer is a particularly busy time with more than 80 waterfronts, in addition to 40 pools.

- Commissioner Roy noted recent saves by DCR lifeguards at Revere Beach and Lake Wyola. Our lifeguards are well-trained and certified, do a magnificent job.
- DCR's Learn to Swim program already has had great success. There are 11 programs for adults and children. Last year (2017), 900 people graduated from the Learn to Swim program.

Article 97 Update

DCR was approached by the Town of Westminster with the idea of expanding their landfill into state land. It will be a very long, multi-step process with enabling legislation and a series of permits needed. Under Article 97, any parcels acquired must be of equal or greater value ecologically in addition to fair financial compensation. There will be plenty of opportunities through the public process for individuals to weigh in. EEA will make the final decision through the MEPA process.

Other article 97 dispositions moving through the legislature:

- A land swap by the Hull Redevelopment Authority. Hull owns three parcels and DCR owns one in the middle. The plan is to swap parcels--with a benefit to DCR of the new DCR parcel located directly across from our bathhouse and the town benefits with continuous parcels. We have asked the town improve the parking lot before any swap.
- Gardner Heritage State Park disposition.

Elisa Campbell asked Commissioner Roy for the definition of a "road diet." The Commissioner answered that many of our roadways are wider than the traffic warrants. When car lanes are reduced, it creates bike and pedestrian accommodations. The Commissioner also said he prefers to take up asphalt, not put it down.

Elisa Campbell asked what the elevation level in Hull is. A discussion followed about the wisdom of building in flood plains. The Commissioner pointed out that he always includes language in MEPA letters, "questioning the advisability of building in low lying areas over the hundred-year flood-plain." It is his recommendation to turn those areas into parks.

Chairman Hatch asked about lifeguard recruitment this year. The Commissioner said that thanks to a two-dollar an hour increase in pay and an intensive outreach campaign, DCR was able to attract approximately 700 lifeguards into the fold. The Commissioner stated that DCR will have a lifeguard attrition problem in August due to students returning to college. Loss of manpower late in the season is an annual challenge.

Chairman Hatch returned to the topic of the landfill. He mentioned that this Council can and probably should opine on this issue and asked the Council for flexibility to draft a letter to the Ways and Means Committee stating the Council's opposition to this expansion and if legislation

does go forward, that the agency should get equal value ecologically and significant financial compensation.

Marianne Hartmann asked how a landfill came to be in a location surrounded by state park land, and the Commissioner answered he understood that the landfill was there first. The land is owned by the City of Gardner in the Town of Westminster and that both communities receive significant financial benefits -- they are proponents of the project.

A Council member opined that if this goes through, other towns with similar trash issues will follow as most have financial issues.

Melissa Harper asked if there was data from the towns as to what they are earning currently and what they will gain if they allowed to go through with the proposal.

Commissioner Roy said he does not have the numbers but noted they are significant. The City Council of Gardner and the Westminster select board have approved motions for the landfill expansion.

Several members weighed in on their positions relative to the share of compensation DCR should receive if this deal goes through, if the Commissioner had a sense of the legislature's position and sending a letter in opposition to the legislature.

Commissioner Roy said he was surprised with so much media coverage around this issue it has moved along this far, his posture is not to see parks used for any other purpose. He noted it is not his decision to make, but by the EEA Secretary who has oversight of DEP and DCR and by the legislature. If the decision is made that there is an overarching public need, then we should be appropriately compensated.

A member suggested that we have more information from DCR staff on this in a subsequent meeting. Commissioner Roy suggested we could invite the proponents to come in and make their case.

After some deliberation, Chairman Hatch motioned to send a letter to the House Ways & Means Committee objecting to the landfill expansion and urging further study. The motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

Policy Committee Update

Policy Chairwoman Elisa Campbell reported on Resource Management Plans (RMPs) underway at Myles Standish Complex, Blackstone Complex and the Harbor Islands Complex.

Myles Standish Complex Resource Management Plan is receiving internal review and comments on a draft and after a final public meeting will bring it to the Council in the fall.

Blackstone has had its first public meeting and is planning a meeting with the Friends of Upton State Forest. Paul is in the resource inventory and assessment stage.

Harbor Islands team meetings focused on capital planning and hazardous materials assessments. Spectacle Island is in partner meetings with the City of Boston aimed at development of management recommendations.

Chairwoman Campbell noted for the benefit of new members that the legislation that created DCR requires RMPs. Budget and staff cuts have required thick documents getting thinner.

Chairman Hatch stated, citing the Oversight Document, it is mind boggling how much the staff can do over DCR's 300 facilities.

Budget Committee Update

Chairwoman Heather Clish was unable to attend but Chairman Hatch reported on her spreadsheet, made available to members.

Highlights from House Budget Ways and Means Budget Consolidated with Amendments and Senate Budget still in conference:

- \$3 million for parkways street lighting was moved into Parks and Recreation line
- \$3 million (implicit in Governor's Budget) can be used for snow and ice removal
- \$250,000 earmarked to continue asset management modernization system
- Instead of earmarks, there's a "special project" line in the House Budget, Heather is sifting through Senate version which looks like a \$2 million increase over last year and seasonal line looks adequate to keep camping open to full complement.

Special Business -- Presentation by Alec Gilman on Interpretive Programs at DCR

Commissioner Roy stated that our interpreters are trained professionals.

Alec noted Interpretive Services is a Bureau of the agency. DCR follows the standards of the National Association for Interpretation, the same standards at the National Parks Service.

It takes a skilled interpreter to pull out value and meaning in a story for the end game purpose of building stewardship. We offer personal and non-personal interaction to make meaningful

connections in our parks. Non-personal connections include signs, brochures, exhibits, videos and other media.

We provide new seasonal interpreters an orientation to develop their skills and technique. Through a 32-hour course, they become certified. We go over history, theory, thematic development, audience identification and evaluation.

Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis is a certified interpretive guide. Additionally, certified host training is a 24-hour commitment -- useful for Supervisors. We work across all areas of the agency including on signage to build public understanding of our mission. We have 17 full-time and 66 long- and short-term staff and conduct programming at 43 facilities.

Interpretive Services also is the bridge to the Student Conservation Association.

Questions ensued including from Chairman Hatch asking about the arc of interpretation, vacancies in Interpretive Services and if expansion were to occur, how would you decide?

Commissioner Roy said we instill in all employees the mission of improving the visitor experience. We have our professionals and amateurs and would like to expand that. He said we would like to have a full-time Regional Interpretive Coordinator like Alec in more regions, as a starting place. Expansion of services would start with “signature” parks like Walden, Greylock and Boston Harbor Islands. There are other places where interpreters go on the road.

Melissa Harper asked Alec how he markets programs.

He answered they are publicized to local media, reside on DCR website’s online program calendar. Information is on park kiosks and visitor center front desks. He noted that Google and Trip Advisor reviews give us direction in responding to visitor interests.

Chairman Hatch thanked Alec for his presentation and gave Council members “summer homework” to think about agenda items and issues we have already identified:

- Asset management
- Climate readiness
- Environmental Bond will pass – and there will be implementation issues with the agency
- Conundrum of RMPs – is there a way we can be helpful to the agency by proposing an alternative so we can speed up the process?
- Joint meeting with Fish and Wildlife
- Internal Communications and Constituent Services
- Bringing in outside guests.

Approval of Minutes

Elisa Campbell raised the issue of accelerating minutes to the Council and Chairman Hatch said he and Stephen Doody have had the discussion and minutes to the Council will be accelerated and Council members are encouraged to give a swift review upon receipt.

It was decided to defer approval of the June minutes for members to have more time to review.

Noting that there are minor editorial comments in the April minutes, Chairman Hatch motioned to approve the April minutes with editorial comments by Dennis Smith and Elisa Campbell. The motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

Public Comment

Don Ogden – Producer and co-host of an environmental radio show. Strongly supports the proposal calling for the 80 acres [Wendell State Forest] to be placed in reserve status and stated old growth forests are among the few natural systems to support climate readiness.

Richard Stafursky – Lives in Brattleboro, VT and is president of a land trust in Conway, MA. Noted it is the only non-profit land trust with the word “species” in its name. This was his family’s land and when inherited was given away to hold into perpetuity. “I am the only one who has done that.” He was interested in discussion of Westminster and Gardner land. Offered an example in the Town of Hadley [“he thinks”] there is a land trust that purchased contaminated land, they decontaminated it and built a nature center. Said it is not conserving or mitigating and implored the Council to take the high ground in Westminster. Also said we should promote the broad-leaf species forests and in all catering, to please offer vegan entrees in state parks, and hire “ethical vegans” to positions of authority. Asked to please consider the forest is for the animals who live there and the Native Americans.

Bill Bowles – New England Mountain Bike Association and Friends of Wompatuck. Said he is glad to hear DCR funding has gone up and hopes it continues. Said he explored this area in the past and tomorrow will explore the Montague Plain Wildlife Management Area [on bicycle]. Regarding Wompatuck State Park mentioned there was a possibility of a donation of tested, clean dirt, and is pleased DCR has approved that permit and hopes that dirt will end up in Wompatuck. Said the Friends are meeting with DCR planners to discuss a possible new playground at Wompatuck. Recommends reading the book **The Overstory: A Novel** – said he learned a lot on current thinking in forestry through this novel. Said many years ago he was a Philosophy and Psychology major and spent time thinking about ethics and morals. Thinking about autonomous vehicles, posited an ethical question: what will a computer program decide if [five] kids on bikes dart out into a two-lane road? Does it decide to swerve into another lane to avoid the kids? Go up on the sidewalk? He sees a lot of lawsuits with this new technology.

Lisa Hoag – Wendell Historical Commission. Noted she is self-employed and it has cost her personally financially to make time to come to these meetings. Requested that the schedule of meetings be made available at least a month in advance to build a more collaborative relationship with the people of Massachusetts and better plan dialogue. She did receive the DCR letter, and her coalition is still in deliberation. They don't agree with the direction DCR is taking on landscape designation. She said they have been asking for a conversation among DCR officials and indigenous tribal officials on historical and cultural sites. Asked that DCR place this forest into reserve status. Requested an Eastern Connecticut Valley Resource Management Plan due to increased amount of logging. Expressed concern about drought due to cutting trees.

Chairman Hatch motioned to adjourn at 2 p.m. for the site tour portion of the meeting. The motion was seconded, all in favor, motion carried.