



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
Friday, October 12, 2018 | 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Western Gateway Heritage State Park
115 State Street, Building 4, North Adams

October Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Elisa Campbell, Heather Clish, Michele Hanss, Whitney Hatch, Katherine Sharry and Dennis Smith

Council Members Not Present: Melissa Harper, David C. Murphy, Jim Van Dyke and Nate Walton

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Stephen Doody, William Hill, Joe Rotondo, Leo Roy and Domenick Sacco

Public Attendees (and stated affiliation): Richard Starfursky, Species Forest Inc., Brattleboro, VT; Bill Boles, New England Mountain Bike Association and Friends of Wompatuck; John Galt, Friends of Peru State Forest; Susan Masino, Friends of Peru State Forest; Peter Liberman, Friends of Peru State Forest; Chuck Anastas, Massachusetts Conservation Voters (MCV); Henry Woolsey, MCV; Janet Sinclair Shelburne Falls; Glen Ayers, Greenfield Citizen-Wendell Petition; Sarah Soffer.

Welcome and Call to Meeting

Chairman Hatch called the meeting to order at 12:08pm.

Chairman Hatch introduced new Councilor Katherine (Kate) Sharry from Paxton, MA. He also announced that William “Bill” Hill, DCR State Forest Lands Manager, would be presenting a forestry overview today.

A member of the public asked if it would be OK to record the proceedings and Chairman Hatch said it would.

Chairman Hatch also announced that he and his brother would once again be participating in the Head of the Charles Regatta this fall and that they would be sporting DCR tee-shirts. Commissioner Roy added that Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton also will be taking part in the Regatta.

Chairman Hatch asked Commissioner Roy for a quick update on the Westminster State Forest issue; the Commissioner replied that the bill “died in committee.”

Chairman Hatch then took the opportunity to explain to incoming Councilor Sharry that she will notice that “Article 97 updates” is a standing item on the monthly agenda – it is there so that Commissioner Roy can keep the Stewardship Council apprised of any new or evolving Article 97 issues.

Chairman Hatch invited DCR Commissioner Roy to deliver the “Commissioner’s Report.”

Commissioner’s Report

Commissioner Roy shared the history of the building where this meeting is taking place—the old freight house building to the Hoosac Tunnel. Just 2 miles south east of this spot, stands the Hoosac Tunnel itself.

- Any freight train going in or out of this region of Massachusetts passes through that tunnel and past this building.
- In 1875, the tunnel opened to freight train traffic after 25 years of construction with the Civil War beginning and ending in the middle of that time.
- The Hoosac Tunnel was the first railroad tunnel project ever attempted in North America; commonly known as one of the greatest railroad engineering achievements in history. This is for many reasons, most notably for the accuracy of the tunnel excavation.
- Two crews, over the course of 25 years, dug on either side of the Hoosac Mountain sans the use of technology. When the two sides connected, their measurements were off by a mere inch, an accomplishment that astounds engineers to this day.
- The Hoosac Tunnel has never seen a vacation day, making it the longest running freight tunnel in history. Today, some 30 to 40 trains pass through its walls and along Western Heritage Gateway State Park daily.
- It is an honor for DCR to steward this priceless historical landmark. I encourage you to walk through the museum, watch the PBS documentary, and take in its impressive story.

Camping Season Comes to a Close

- 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 winter approaches, state campgrounds will be seeing their last visitors for the season.

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.

Winthrop Shore Drive

- Winthrop Shore Drive has been a major undertaking that’s been in the works since the 1980’s when the Winthrop Beach Restoration Program came to be through the “Plan for the future of Boston Harbor Beaches”.

- The project has been a three phase undertaking. First, with two phases of beach improvements in 2013 and 2014.
- Those improvements include:
 - New seawall railing and seawall repairs;
 - New park that highlights the history of the narrow gauge railway;
 - New rinse stations;
 - New benches, tables and seating area and water fountains;
 - New bike racks;
 - New and repaired catch basins;
 - New central water main that serves entire neighborhood (Town contributed \$1,000,000).
- The third phase, the Winthrop Shore Drive Improvement Project, is a reconstruction of the parkway.
- Finishing nine months ahead of schedule, the parkway offers new roadways, crosswalks, sidewalks, entrances, and climate resilient drainage and storm damage management elements.
- The project significantly increases the climate change resiliency and adaptability of the shore line, surrounding lands, and neighborhoods.
- Unveiling years of hard work to complete the Winthrop Beach Rehabilitation Project is a proud moment for DCR and the Baker-Polito Administration.

Summer Nights Initiative 2018

- The expanded Fourth Annual Summer Nights initiative was a success. It which increases programming and extends the hours of operations at select pools and athletic complexes in several cities across the state.
- The program targeted urban neighborhoods and communities, offering recreational opportunities, and increased programming at state parks and other facilities, as well as extending the hours of operations at select pool facilities.
- Significantly expanding the number of partner organizations who provide specialty programming including athletics, arts and crafts, music, and so much more demonstrates the Baker-Polito Administration's commitment to today's youth, to build memories, stimulate their minds, and spend valuable time outdoors.
- Additionally, extended hours of operations complemented other programs already offered by the DCR for families at throughout state parks, forests, and beaches across the state.

Thompson Footbridge Ribbon Cutting

- The Watertown community saw a welcome addition to the Charles River Greenway. The Thompson Footbridge has formally opened further enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities for all accessibility levels.

- The new steel and wood bridge has a sleek design complimented by expanded pathways, and updated landscaping – all ADA compliant.

Dunn's Pond Pavilion Ribbon Cutting

- The City of Gardner and visitors of Dunn State Park now have a shaded space for picnics and activities. The Dunn Pond Pavilion was unveiled yesterday, though visitors made use of the space all summer long.
- The idea for the pavilion came from visitors and is a great addition to the urban park. This is a shining example of the Baker – Polito administration's commitment to answer the call of residents of Massachusetts.

MacDonald Park Overview Ribbon Cutting

- Recently, DCR's Mystic River Reservation has seen significant recreational improvements thanks in part to the generosity of the Wolk family.
- Torbert MacDonald State Park, located within the Mystic River Reservation, has been outfitted with increased access to the water's edge, picnic tables, benches, bike racks, and updated landscaping.
- This project is a wonderful tribute to the late Massachusetts Congressman Torbert and a testament to the phrase "giving back to your community."

Head of the Charles

- As you know, the 54th Annual Head of the Charles Regatta is on the horizon. The excitement begins Friday, October 19, 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 people to DCR's Charles River banks and dominates 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.

Greening the Gateway Communities 15K Trees

- A very important milestone for DCR's Urban and Community Forestry *Greening the Gate Way Cities Program* is planting its fifteen thousandth tree this month.
- Healthy urban forests improve the quality of the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the stability of our neighborhoods, and our sense of community and individual pride.
- This is a significant accomplishment for the Baker-Polito administration and it further displays the Administration's commitment to Massachusetts urban communities.

Councilor Campbell asked if the gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley impacted DCR at all. Commissioner Roy responded that no agency buildings or facilities were adversely affected. Commissioner Roy also reported the EEA Secretary Beaton has been continuously stationed in the Merrimack Valley to assist with recovery efforts since the crisis began.

Policy Committee Update

Councilor Campbell reported that Policy and Planning Committee had not been meeting because RMPs are still being worked on and stated her frustration with ambiguous boundaries. She also commented that the RMP work correlates with the ongoing Asset Management program and hopes that the Legislature understand that fact.

Recognizing the limitations of working through the RMPs, Chairman Hatch suggested the Policy Committee come up with "yard sticks" and a timeline that is doable so that within our committee there is a demonstrated effort manage this while fleshing out the full database. He then commended Commissioner Roy and EEA's Faye Boardman for their full support of the Asset Management program and urged all to "keep the foot on the gas."

Finance Committee Update

Councilor Clish said the Finance Committee report would be brief as it's "an organizing time" in the budget cycle. She noted the current DCR operating budget received a \$10 million dollar boost – breaking down thusly: \$5M in earmarks, \$3M in snow/ice related expenditures and a \$2M "meaningful increase." She also reported that the Finance Committee would be looking at what they want in the budget in FY '20.

Chairman Hatch commented that when the timing is right, he would be interested in hearing DCR's five-year forward looking budget priorities for capital and deferred maintenance.

Commissioner Roy commented that in addition to filling various budget buckets, the Environmental Bond Bill also placed an emphasis on addressing climate change resiliency priorities.

Councilor Campbell asked if Dam Safety monies were included in the Environmental Bond Bill and Commissioner Roy answered in the affirmative.

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Chairman Hatch highlighted a new item in the minutes: Council members not present.

Councilor Campbell asked if Councilor James Van Dyke (not present) planned to attend any future meetings. The prevailing sentiment was that he would not - due in large part to professional obligations.

Chairman Hatch invited DCR's Bill Hill to begin his Forestry presentation.

Special Business – Presentation by William H. Hill, CF; State Forest Lands Manager, Bureau of Forestry, DCR Approval of Minutes

BILL HILL PRESENTATION

Councilor Sharry asked Bill Hill who buys DCR's timber products. He answered that various entities from around New England purchase them.

Councilor Clish asked Bill if the timber proceeds get deposited into DCR's retained revenue account. He answered that no, in fact, proceeds go into the Forest Products Trust Fund.

Councilor Smith asked Bill Hill if trimming and clearing are significant components to maintaining healthy forests, as indicated by Chief Dave Celino at the previous month's Stewardship Council meeting. He answered that yes, many of the techniques Chief Celino cited are important parts of the overall forest management strategy.

Councilor Campbell commented that the ice storms of 2008 seemed to have done horrendous damage to western Massachusetts forests. Bill Hill agreed that the weather event did significant damage and created great stress on the trees. However, he noted that in the long run, gypsy moths and winter moths have more of a deleterious effect on forest health than storms.

Councilor Clish asked if Bill Hill's presentation would be available electronically and was informed that it would be. She also asked him how forest management can adapt to climate change. He said four ongoing projects have an adaptation focus to them. He also said stronger storms, heavier rains and warmer winters have inspired better road construction and bigger culverts.

Bill noted and there is a rigorous transparent public process around timber sales. That revenue is used to fix roads and bridges and \$150,000 of it statutorily goes back to cities and towns.

Commissioner Roy pointed out that Bill Hill has a counterpart in Water Supply Protection that also focuses on ecosystem benefits. He emphasized that forest management at DCR is driven by a scientific process; DCR is responsible for forest health across the Commonwealth and the agency takes the responsibility very seriously and is buttressed by robust public engagement.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Hatch motioned to approve the September minutes. The motion was seconded; all in favor, the motion carried. [Note: Kate Sharry abstained]

Councilor Campbell expressed appreciation for the timely distribution of the minutes.

Other Business

Chairman Hatch gave an update on an issue brought to the Council's attention in September by Bill Boles of the New England Mountain Bike Association. The police detail costs (\$1,200) associated with an event were deemed to be onerous by organizers and the event was cancelled as a result. After a review of the matter, it was determined that the Carlisle Police Department was mandating that three officers work the event – a decision that was clearly outside the purview of DCR.

Public Comment

Chairman Hatch invited John Galt of Peru, MA to deliver comments. Mr. Galt said he espoused a “less is more” approach to forest management, which he believes is counter to how DCR is currently manages forests.

Richard Stafursky of the non-profit Species Forest, Inc. announced that he is an ethical vegan and cited his educational credentials. He said he did not agree philosophically with DCR's forest management approach that was presented at today's meeting – it lacked any reference to “the wonders of nature.”

Bill Boles of the New England Mountain Bike Association urged DCR to close trails while work is being done on them. He also said he saw no inherent conflict between responsible forestry management and the use of trails for recreational purposes. He also said DCR was not a factor and played no role in the recent cancellation of their event.

Glen Ayers of Greenfield submitted to the Council 1,100 petition signatures gathered in opposition to the Wendell State Forest timber sale. He also submitted a notice of intent to sue in Superior Court and seek a restraining order or preliminary injunction regarding activities at Wendell State Forest. Mr. Ayers stated that he believes DCR's forest management planning process as structured doesn't work. Chairman Hatch thanked Mr. Ayers for his advocacy.

Jan Sinclair of the public commented that the boundaries of Wendell State Forest should be clearly marked. She also asked whether the public would have access to that day's DCR forestry presentation and was told it would be available online.

Susan Masino introduced herself as a neuroscientist and newly-certified forestry professional who is interested in being appointed to the Stewardship Council. She believes DCR forestry policies need to better align with the agency's mission. She said forest cutting is not the solution to deal with the pests – the forest will evolve to handle such challenges.

Chairman Hatch motioned to close the meeting at 2:17 pm. The motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

The next meeting will be held November 10 in Westborough.