

*Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

**Stewardship Council**

*Stewardship Council*

**Whitney Hatch, Chair**

*Walter E. Bickford*

*John R. Buckley*

*Elisa K. Campbell*

*Heather A. Clish*

*Wayne A. Klockner*

*Chad J. McGuire*

*Christine L. Poff*

*Antonia M. Pollak*

*James P. VanDyke*

**December 10, 2014**

**Governor-Elect Charlie Baker**

c/o Baker-Polito Transition Committee  
1505 Commonwealth Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Brighton, MA 02135

**RE: DCR Transition Recommendation – Priority Assessment**

Dear Governor-Elect Baker:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) improves the quality of Massachusetts residents' lives every day. Its 300,000 acres of urban and non-urban parks, 37 swimming pools, 8 skating rinks, 29 campgrounds, 60+ play grounds, 55 ball fields, 2,000+ miles of trails, historic parkways, dam safety responsibilities - and more – make this a great place to live.

The Stewardship Council was established in 2004 to oversee the new Department of Conservation and Recreation with a specific requirement that we approve the Agency's Resource Management Plans and its budget, though our ability to influence annual operating budget appropriations has been challenging.

**Budget Challenges & Needs**

For decades there has been an unmistakable trend of disinvestment in the agency's operating budget. In the past 5 years this trend has accelerated – risking DCR's ability to achieve its new 5-year capital investment plans. Budgets and staffing levels have fallen more than 30 percent in that short period – and significantly more over the past 20 years when factoring in inflation. At the same time the agency has been asked to steward new parks and facilities. As a result, DCR often falls short of both its potential and statutory obligation to provide a meaningful difference in the quality of lives of residents across the Commonwealth. Swimming areas have been closed and parks left without staff to welcome visitors or care for the recreational amenities and natural resources.

Your pledge to restore the state's overall environment operating budget to 1% of the total was a welcome and refreshing sign. Our preliminary analysis indicates the DCR operating



251 Causeway Street  
Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02114-2119  
617-626-1250  
[www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

budget would have to be increased from \$82.8 million (FY15 without earmarks, pre 9C cuts) to \$105 million to reach its proportionate share of the 1% goal.<sup>1</sup>

We look forward to working with your administration and the legislature to find a way to achieve the 1% goal and to accelerate a serious evaluation of the Commonwealth's climate adaptation exposure, beginning with your first budget.

Recommended Transition Step: We believe it is critical to take a step back in order to move DCR ahead. In order to invest wisely its financial and human resources, DCR needs a standardized, data-driven approach to measuring its overall output and productivity. With a small investment in consulting services, DCR could develop a standardized framework and set of metrics that could be used to prioritize where to optimally allocate existing resources across the state. The goal would be not only to evaluate current efficiency and service delivery, but also to deliver a product that the agency can use over and over to prioritize resource needs and investment.

To that end we recommend you fund an independent, 6-month effort to create a financial and operational system to guide how operating funds should be deployed across DCR's properties. This system should prioritize facilities based on simple criteria, determine existing resource allocations to each unit, evaluate staffing patterns and needs, determine standard service levels for each category of facility, and determine where additional operating funds should be invested given existing resource levels and investment need.

In 2006 we hoped to launch an independent analysis but the \$250,000 needed never materialized. A pilot effort by DCR staff convinced us such an independent analysis would produce results well worth the investment. The Stewardship Council is eager to oversee such an effort. This analysis would indicate how quickly and where funding from a "1% environmental budget" should be deployed.

We look forward to working with you and your administration to enhance the experience of our citizens in the Commonwealth's Park and Recreation System.

Sincerely,



**Whitney Hatch**  
Chairman

---

<sup>1</sup> *Climate Adaptation Funding: This operating goal does not include funding to cover a coordinated effort and investment to assess and plan for Climate Adaptation which DCR, owner of many of the Commonwealth's natural resources affected, should begin. DCR should have additional resources to play a central role in working with all affected State agencies and the many partners from educational institutions, not for profit organizations, health care organizations, municipalities and others working on this critical environmental/public health issue.*

DCR Stewardship Council:

**Walter E. Bickford**

*Worcester County, Berlin*

**John R. Buckley**

*Plymouth County, Abington*

**Elisa K. Campbell**

*Hampshire County, Amherst*

**Heather A. Clish**

*Middlesex County, Reading*

**Wayne A. Klocker**

*Middlesex County, Acton*

**Chad McGuire**

*Bristol County, Dartmouth*

**Christine L. Poff**

*Suffolk County, Boston*

**Antonia M. Pollak**

*Suffolk County, Charlestown*

**James P. VanDyke**

*Berkshire County, Hancock*

cc: *Steven Kadish, Chief of Staff*  
*Representative Matthew Beaton*  
*DCR Commissioner John P. Murray*