

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEETING

Fall River Heritage State Park

July 28, 2022 9:15 am-11:30 am

VIDEOCONFERENCING & IN PERSON

In person attendance: DCR Stewardship Chair Jack Buckley and Councilors Dicken Crane, Dennis Smith, Jeff Collins; DCR staff Commissioner Doug Rice, Nick Connors, Paul Cavanaugh, Peter Church, Jessica Rowcroft.

Via video conferencing attendance: Vice Chair Melissa Harper and Councilors Susan Smiley, Ann Canedy, Jennifer Wilson; DCR staff Jennifer Norwood, Dan Cushing

Absent: Councilor Vivian Ortiz

Public participants: Lynne Mann (Sierra Club), Karl Gerauld, Janet Sinclair, Sarah Freeman (Arborway), Buzz Constable, Bill Boles (NEMB), Ken Conkey, Glen Ayers, Charlie Thompson, Chuck Anastas, Chris Redfern (Friends of the Fells), Maddie Morgan, Susan Wilkinson, Michael Nichols, Laurel Wendell, Lyndsay Nystrom, Chris Egan, Janet, Jerome Sobierjai.

Welcome & Chairman's Update: DCR Stewardship Chair Jack Buckley opened the meeting at approximately 9:15 am by taking the roll call of DCR Committee members and announcing a quorum. He apologized for the late notice on meeting location. Chair Buckley commented as follows:

- Chair Buckley acknowledged the recent assault on a Myles Standish State Park employee.
- Chair Buckley attended the Summer Nights Kick off with the Governor.
- Chair Buckley noted that he has received questions about leases and asked DCR to give a public presentation before the Council on leases-how many there are, how leases are decided upon (some by direction of the Legislature).
- He also acknowledged that DCR will be filling 50 new positions and would like to know DCR's strategy on filling those positions.
- Chair Buckley announced that the meeting would include the presentation of DCR Stewardship Council's 2024 Budget Recommendations. He has been involved in this effort since its beginning. This is the 2nd year the Council has presented its Recommendations. This year the process included a public listening session. He would like to see this process continue.
- Chair Buckley noted he received a call regarding water quality related closures. He urged that ALL closures regardless of reason be listed under the same section in the website for convenience of the public. Nick Connors remarked that DCR is open to suggestions on how to do that; this is the first year this information was put on the web.
- Chair Buckley lamented that he had put a lot of work into working with the Solomon Foundation to secure funding and that this grant opportunity (\$180,000) was taken off the table without explanation. The Agency needs a clear approach to accepting similar grants in the future. Chair Buckley suggests that Staff report at September's meeting on how partnerships are dealt with within the Agency; who becomes responsible, etc.

Commissioner Doug Rice's Report: This is his first report as Commissioner. He turned the discussion over to Mary Caldwell, Project Manager, who is the bridge between the consultant's efforts and DCR's goal of targeted implementation of the Strategic Readiness Plan.

Mary Caldwell's Presentation on Strategic Readiness Plan (very difficult to hear): In June, the Strategic Readiness Initiative made 20 recommendations. Two had agency wide implications. The others were categorized as follows:

- INSPIRE: These were big picture foundational recommendations;
- IMPROVE: These were recommendations which will be dealt with within the Agency to improve processes.
- ALIGN: The Agency plans to take a "deeper dive" into these recommendations to ascertain whether they fit with the DCR's mission and core values.

Target Deliverables by 12/31/22 include:

- Staffing: Convert 50 LTS to FTE; hire 50 FTE agency wide.
- Capital Planning & Delivery: Redesign the Capital Planning process.
- Visitor Experience: Initiate interpretative training for all public-facing staff.
- Partnership Strategy: Develop a partnership strategy.
- Research Agenda: Develop a research agenda.

Council Questions/Comments:

- Councilor Dicken Crane: Based on meetings DCR had on Strategic Readiness, the public is concerned with enhanced communication in all ways in which DCR interacts – including website. Nick Connors responded that DCR is working with key strategists to improve web use, an initiative separate and apart from Strategic Readiness process. DCR is going back and forth about funding sources but will reach out to the public to define how best to deliver.
- Councilor Jeff Collins: (Question and answer inaudible)
- Councilor Susan Smiley: Who is leading on deliverables? Mary Caldwell responded that DCR staff was responsible for day-to-day internal goals but DCR will bring in partners and/or subject matter experts as needed.
- Vice Chair Melissa Harper: Are these staff members working on the Strategic Readiness in addition to their other roles? Mary Caldwell responded that she is a dedicated employee to this task, but that others were working in addition to their other roles. They are very motivated, however, to move this project forward.
- Councilor Dennis Smith: It is very important to stay on track and for DCR Stewardship Council to be advised through the rest of the calendar year on exactly how this process is progressing.
- Chair Jack Buckley: It is important that the people who have advocated for DCR budget increase, have the opportunity to know how the money has been spent and the decisions and strategies behind these expenditures. For example, the hiring of 50 new positions – that is a real opportunity for DCR to talk about these things. There were a large number of people involved in the UMass Study; many people attended public Strategic Readiness listening sessions sponsored by DCR Stewardship Council; many people advocated for increasing DCR's budget. It

is important to include these groups in the discussion. DCR Stewardship Council meetings can be used to “shine a light” on these discussions.

Continued Report by Commissioner Rice: Due to high temperatures and lack of rain, there was an increase in use of DCR’s parks and beaches across the board. A shout out goes to field operations and special events planners. A specific example was the coordination between design engineering group and operations to open DCR spray decks and expand pool hours during the recent heat wave. Highlights of the Commissioner’s first month includes:

- Summer Nights Kick Off
- Mass Trails Program: DCR announced the allocation of \$11 million in grants for 81 projects impacting 100 communities. These grants go to the development, design and maintenance of important and diverse trails and connections. The Hubluv Initiative grant will help identify critical links in the system and move design efforts along.
- On June 28th, DCR acquired 2 long sought-after parcels in the Mt. Tom State Reservation. These 28 acres lie in the center of previously acquired conserved lands.
- DCR entered into a Climate Resiliency and Adaptive Planning partnership with the city of Boston. \$2.2 million dollars was earmarked in Federal Pre-disaster Mitigation for South Boston and Dorchester to complete all planning and design for flood and resiliency connections on DCR properties on both sides of Moakley Park.
- The internal survey as part of the Landscape Designation Review was released last month in advance of the upcoming public process.

Nick Connors reported on:

- Doyle Project: The 50% design will be completed by the end of August; permitting will occur in September; bid process will start thereafter; and construction projected for 2023. The fabricated playground is being designed, following on a parallel track.
- Edgewater Project: 50% design was presented at a Stakeholders meeting July 21. Archeological research and survey are going on now. A larger public hearing is planned for September; construction projected for FY2024.

Continuation of Commissioner’s Report:

- Commissioner supports hiring of administrative personnel for DCR Stewardship Council.
- The Commissioner welcomed David Byrnes who will support Jenny Norwood’s work in partnerships.
- The Commissioner recognized past DCR priorities: Partnerships; Visibility; Resource Management Plans

Councilor Questions:

- Councilor Smiley: Councilor Smiley hoped that DCR is expanding equity and inclusion in these trail connections and hoped that Mt. Tom will remain open to the public.
- Councilor Wilson: Commented on recent attack on DCR employee at Myles Standish State Park and the tragic drowning at Mystic Lake.

- Chair Buckley: Remarked that the Commissioner neglected to mention the demise of retained revenue.

Presentation by Jessica Rowcroft and Peter Church on Landscape Designations & Management

Guidelines:

Forest Future Visioning 2009-2010- Adoption of Ecosystems Services Model

- Biological/ecosystem diversity
- Soil, air, water quality
- Carbon sequestration
- Nutrient cycling
- Culture, history, spiritual values
- Public recreation
- Renewable wood products

After completion of the initial process, DCR embarked on implementation of the Landscape Designations & Management Guidelines which were adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council on April 6, 2012.

Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship, - Designations developed in 2012 Landscape Designations Guidelines:

- Parklands: 70,000-90,000 acres; robust computer analysis considered population around the area, density of trails; focused on recreation, reconnecting people to nature while providing recognition of aesthetic, cultural values; protection of ecologically and culturally significant special places. Eg. Middlesex Falls
- Woodlands: 100,000-150,000 acres; Important to demonstrate excellent forest management practices while protecting water supplies, early successional habitat, carbon sequestration; sustainable production of timber for local markets. Eg. Dubuque State Forest
- Reserves: 90,000-120,000 acres; analysis of least fragmented areas, large protected blocks. Eg. Mohawk Trail, Mount Greylock

2012 Management Guidelines:

- The key is reviewing the document every 10 years; within that review, making the necessary adjustments after assessing effectiveness.
- As new acquisitions are realized, how are they get integrated into categories? Eg. Mt. Tom is categorized as parkland.

2022 Review (Jessica Rowcroft):

- January 2022: Internal working group representing a wide cross section of DCR was assembled.
- February-May 2022: Review of 2012 Guidelines-how they worked in practice; how response to climate resiliency needs to incorporate new data.
- June 2022: Review acquisitions DCR has made in last 10 years to formalize designations and solicit internal input.
- June 3, 2022: Consult with FRSAC (Forest Reserve Science Advisory Commission)
- June 6, 2022: Consult with DFW (Division of Fish & Wildlife)

- June 17, 2022: Distribute internal survey
- July/August: Internal input session; Stewardship Council update; 2nd internal input session; prep for public process
- August 23-September 14: Public input & feedback:
 - 3 virtual meetings
 - 2 in person meetings
 - 1 forest walk
- Fall 2022: Release of Landscape Designations Review

Peter Church continues:

The initial focus areas review the guidelines for consistency (Strategic Readiness Core Principles-Forest Action Plan goals); updated concerns (new data on climate resiliency and forestry roles; working with Native Americans); GIS (reviewing data on boundaries; inclusion of lands acquired since 2012; review intensive use areas); larger considerations (establish metrics for 2032; emphasize habitat protection; establish Patch Reserves)

Patch Reserves: Parcels significant enough that they should be incorporated into Landscape Designations.

Potential Actions for 2022-2032:

- Consolidation or reinvigoration of existing programs; how representative natural area woodlands can be incorporated.
- Update trail density surveys.
- Develop routine staff training and updated educational materials.
- Work with interpretative services to develop/promote public programs around forestry.
- FRSAC: Increase visibility; meet more frequently; work more on research collaboration; utilize subject matter experts.

Councilor Questions/Comments:

- Councilor Smith: Asked how DCR planned to include Native Americans. (Initial discussion focus area). (RESPONSE INAUDIBLE). Councilor Smith asked how the acquisition of new lands is being considered in terms of energy efficiency and climate resiliency goals. (This discussion was largely inaudible)
- Councilor Dickens: Commented that there has been a lot of evolution in the science of climate change. He believes it is important to focus on and have awareness of vulnerability within reserve areas. Impact needs to be part of the analysis. What can we do to create a more resilient, adaptive forest? The goal is to have the healthiest forest we can have and sometimes doing nothing is not enough. (Response inaudible)
- Councilor Smiley: How do the Landscape Designation goals align with asset management?
- Chair Buckley: What role does DCR envision the Council will take? Jessica Rowcroft responded that in 2012, the Council offered a lot of guidance and a good dialogue was developed. It is their goal to establish the same type of dialogue for this process. Chair Buckley pointed out that the Council had a positive role in the RFP process and could be helpful in this process. He deferred to Councilor Wilson on how the Policy subcommittee would participate. He urged Councilors to

attend the public meetings. Peter Church noted that in 2012, the then Chair wanted the Guidelines brought forward to Council for approval. Councilor Wilson noted that the Landscape Designations were inextricably related to the RMPs. The Policy subcommittee will discuss how the Council can best engage in the process without slowing it down.

Stewardship Council 2024 Budget Recommendations:

Chair Buckley prepared and sent out the Budget Recommendations. He received comments from two Councilors – Vice Chair Harper and Councilor Smiley - and tried to incorporate the comments into the recommendations. Last year the Council prepared Budget Recommendations which the Chair hoped had some impact on DCR's decision making and he further hoped that the Legislature listened to the Council's concerns about retained revenue. The Recommendations underline 4 areas:

- Partnerships – Increase the capability of DCR to develop partnerships;
- Visibility- Make an investment in branding and outreach;
- Fully fund RMP process;
- Fund the implementation of the Special Commission's Report & Strategic Readiness Initiative.

Councilor Smith ***moved that the Council adopt the DCR Stewardship Council's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Priority Recommendations as presented to all Councilors via email.*** There were no comments. Chair Buckley called for a vote which was ***unanimous***. Chair Buckley will communicate with the Commissioner and Secretary.

Councilor Wilson remarked that the recommendation contained the right topics on which to focus and was a good effort by the Finance subcommittee.

Chair Buckley stated that advocating for an increase of funds for DCR overall was an important element. He emphasized the specific underlined recommendations which were in step with the Strategic Readiness Initiative and which were arrived at independently last year.

Approval of the Minutes:

Councilor Smith made three revision suggestions to the June 9th meeting Minutes. ***Councilor Smith moved the approval of the Minutes, assuming revisions.*** The Motion was seconded. All in favor. The ***Minutes were accepted.***

Public Comments:

- Janet Sinclair: H4784 is a bill before the Legislature. She urged DCR Council and others to read and support it. She has been doing a lot of public outreach and the average person does not know that DCR manage forests nor do they want forests to be managed. She stated that a lot of scientists opine that it is best not to manage lands. She believes DCR's discussions on how lands should be managed is "insider baseball"; DCR exists in a silo and is out of touch with how the public feels.
- Karl Gerauld: Dismayed over cutting of trees. Contacted DCR about vacancies on the Council and other matters but never gets a response. Failure to communicate is systemic.
- Bill Boles: New England Mountain Bikes and Wampatuck State Forest. He suggested that in the future, the Stewardship Council consider scheduling some meetings in the evenings. Overall

conditions on the trails have improved. He opined that the attack at Myles Standish and drowning at Mystic Lake were regrettable and is glad that the State House rangers will be available for field duty which may help avoid these incidents in the future.

- Lynne Mann: Sierra Club Protection Team, from Lynnfield. Approved DCR's increased focus on environmental justice and new emphasis on incorporating community partners and expanding research goals but wants to make sure they are "founded in reality of the public and community involvement", especially in respect to Landscape Designations Review. She believed the language of forest resiliency and climate mitigation has been taken up by a lot of sectors who work in forest management, basically to justify logging. There is a lot of current climate science that moves away from active management. The current science is rooted in "let's let our forests alone". She hoped DCR considers the views of others not part of the forestry industry -but "true environmentalists".
- Charlie Thompson: Hampshire County, forester by profession and part of the technical steering committee in 2010. His comments were related to data analysis and the opportunity DCR has. Carbon is complex and contentious; often discussions have "more heat than light". DCR has invested for decades in the collection of real data on the ground. He suggested that DCR invest robustly in the analysis of this data to see what it says. It could be very helpful in management decisions.
- Ken Conkey: Inaudible.
- Sarah Freeman: She has asked for comments from January 2022 meeting and next steps. On "next steps" she received feedback from the community she does not know how to address. For example, the website says that DCR is close to a preferred alternative and the next step is to meet with stakeholder group to discuss any concerns with the final alternative. Her two questions:
 - What is the time frame? Please publicize it.
 - Will the stakeholders be able to see the preferred alternative in advance of the meeting?
- Glen Ayers: Greenfield. Feels that there is no foundation in law, no regulation, no authorization for the Landscape Designation Guidelines. He believed it was established to perpetuate self-serving logging; that the process is front loaded internally by DCR. But- it can be changed by the Commissioner and/or the Stewardship Council. He wanted a "meaningful" review with climate impact analysis.
- Buzz Constable: Member of the Special Commission. While he respects the role that lack of management can play in the sequestration of carbon, he recognized that it is a complex issue and there are many other factors to consider. He urged the Council and others to look at it carefully and in greater detail. On communication, he believed that the DCR could play a greater role in getting comments made during their meetings answered. He asked about whether DCR should be buying out Article 97A land and if it is, why and what is the accounting process.
- Ken Conkey: still inaudible.

Nick Connors commented that it was very difficult to manage breakout sessions in hybrid meeting situation.

Councilor Smith proposed that meetings in the future be fully virtual and suggested that committee chairs arrange their subcommittee meetings separately and outside of the general Council meeting and report back to the full body. Vice Chair Harper stated that in order for in person meetings to be effective, they needed to be planned accordingly and in advance. Quarterly in person meetings allow for better planning and more timely notice.

Chair Buckley noted that hopefully with new staff support, meetings would go more smoothly.

Councilor Wilson stated that she would convene a policy meeting before the September Council meeting. She asked that materials be provided ahead of time. She hopes we don't fully abandon in person meetings.

Chair Buckley asked if the Council would have a voice in choosing the new administrator. Nick Connors said he would have to consult with HR. Chair Buckley noted that it was done at Fish & Wildlife – someone would sit in on the interview, not participate or ask questions.

Councilor Smiley asked that the partnership group presentations be reconvened and may have gotten off track. Chair Buckley responded that with the intervening Landscape Designation Guidelines and Strategic Planning Initiative, partners presentations did indeed get off track.

Councilor Smith looked forward to the new hire.

Councilor Dickens opined that the Agency needs someone beyond the Council support person, who could respond to public's questions.

Councilor Collins noted that our forests help us to respond to the dual crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change. We have seen that forests not resilient to these climate change threats can be lost to fire, disease and other effects. Active and thoughtful stewardship is critical for DCR to invest in, and where that involves active fire management, stewardship can help us create habitat biodiversity and forests resiliency. He is not advocating wide spread aggressive or income driven produce extraction, but acknowledges there is a role for active, thoughtful forest management with oversight.

Chair Buckley: Asked if Wellfleet Campground, newly acquired, was still operating only on weekends due to lack of staffing. The State needs to invest in DCR to keep these resources open.

Motion to Adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Canedy, Secretary, DCR Stewardship Council