# **June 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Dicken Crane, Susan Smiley, Vivian Ortiz, Jeff Collins, Phil Doherty, Ted Dooley, Dennis Smith, Melissa Harper, Jennifer Wilson, Laura Jasinski

Council Members Absent: Ann Canedy

DCR Staff Attendees: Brian Arrigo

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Alex Arriama, Meg Bandera, Chris Egan, Paul Nutting, Andres Ripley, Sarah Freeman,

## Call to Meeting, 9:00am – Chair Jack Buckley

Chair Buckley welcomed everyone to the meeting and did a roll call of councilors present. He said he is really pleased that the council now has a full complement of members, and he welcomed Laura Jasinski, the newly appointed Councilor, Executive Director of the Charles River Conservancy. Chair Buckley thanked Governor Healey for making the appointment. He said that since he has been on the council, there has never been a full complement of councilors, and it is indicative of the Governor’s endorsement of DCR that they now have all 13 members. He also thanked Secretary Tepper and Commissioner Arrigo. He invited Councilor Jasinski to introduce herself.

Councilor Jasinski thanked Chair Buckley and said she is very happy to be joining the council. She spoke about the Charles River Conservancy and her role there, and the Conservancy’s work with DCR. Councilor Jasinski said that she served on the DCR Special Commission and that she is pleased to see DCR implementing the recommendations that came out of the report. Prior to working with the Charles River Conservancy, Councilor Jasinski worked for the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston and the Trustees of Reservation. She is originally from Western Massachusetts.

Chair Buckley thanked Councilor Jasinski.

Chair Buckley said that the response to the Forests as Climate Solutions report came out this week and that Commissioner Arrigo will be saying a few words about it. He said that he read it and that he expects a more detailed presentation to the council on it in the future.

Chair Buckley asked for the council’s approval to invite Secretary Tepper to attend a council meeting in the future. He said that he would like to the Secretary and administration’s goals for the state’s parks. He asked that Commissioner Arrigo extend the invitation to the secretary.

He then thanked Dan Cushing for all of his help with the council over the past month as Matthew Perry has been out on paternity leave.

## DCR Report – Commissioner Brian Arrigo

Commissioner Arrigo thanked the Council for having him and echoed Chair Buckley’s thanks to Dan Cushing. He also welcomed Councilor Jasinski and said he is looking forward to working with her in her new role. He then gave an update on recent activities at the agency.

But first, as you may have seen the Healey-Driscoll Administration released its a work plan earlier this week outlining its plan for implementing the Forest as Climate Solutions initiative that will protect and manage forest lands, while prioritizing efforts to address climate change impacts.

### Update on Forests as Climate Solutions

Commissioner Arrigo reported that the Healey-Driscoll Administration released a work plan earlier this week outlining its plan for implementing the Forest as Climate Solutions initiative that will protect and manage forest lands, while prioritizing efforts to address climate change impacts. This work plan represents a significant milestone in the "Forests as Climate Solutions" Initiative and presents a detailed timeline for putting into action the recommendations made by the Climate Forestry Committee to EEA. The new climate-oriented policies will focus on expanding forest conservation statewide, increasing transparency in agency practices, investing in scientific data to track and guide progress, and implementing specific forest management techniques. The administration also detailed its plans for paused forest management projects and the process for selecting, planning, and monitoring new projects in the future. EEA has finished reviewing the forest management projects that were paused during the first part of the initiative and will resume the selection and vetting process for new projects.

### Camping Reservations

The Commissioner gave a brief update on camping reservations saying that DCR was thrilled that more than 10,000 reservations were booked within the first 24 hours of opening them to the public, double what they took in last year on the first day of reservations going live, and that now more than 48,100 reservations booked at campsites across the state, reflecting just how much people love our parks.

### Opening of DCR Waterfronts

Ahead of Memorial Day Weekend, DCR kicked off the summer season with its annual press conference reminding the public of the importance of water safety when they head to beaches and waterfronts. Memorial Day Weekend marked the opening of DCR’s 81 beaches and waterfronts, and lifeguard services at 16 guarded beaches. On June 15, guard services will expand to seven days a week at all 32 guarded waterfronts across the state. This summer, DCR is increasing multilingual signage across its beaches, including new decals that welcome visitors in nine different languages and efforts were expanded to recruit and hire bilingual lifeguards and water safety staff to work at waterfronts in environmental justice communities.  Commissioner Arrigo announced that DCR is once again providing free swimming lessons for kids at agency managed pools through DCR’s Learn to Swim program and will be announcing the opening of registration for the first session of Learn to Swim in the coming days.

### Water Quality Testing

Commissioner Arrigo joined partners from Save the Harbor/Save the Bay along with Congresswoman Katherine Clark and Representatives Giannino and Turco at Revere Beach for the announcement of Save the Harbor’s annual water quality report card. Despite last year’s record rainfall, nine of DCR’s metro beaches scored a water quality safety rating of over 88% for 2023, with South Boston's beaches once again leading the pack. As part of the agency’s commitment to clean water, DCR conducts regular water quality testing at all agency-managed waterfronts from Memorial Day to Labor Day, in accordance with Department of Public Health regulations. Tests are conducted on Mondays and Tuesdays, depending on the areas of the state and daily testing happens at several of the metro beaches starting on Monday, June 17. When bacterial levels are high, “No Swimming” warnings are posted on site immediately after receiving test results and prompt notification is made to state and local boards of health. A follow-up test is typically conducted within the next 24 to 48 hours. If results show a reduction in bacteria levels where acceptable levels have returned, warnings are removed from the waterfront. Similar to last year, the agency has already seen many of our waterbodies test positive for bacteria and closed for swimming.  When areas do need to close, the test results are posted to the new DPH website and to the DCR park alerts page to notify the public as soon as possible.

### Pool Opening

On Saturday, June 22, DCR opens its 24 pools and two wading pools, offering more opportunities for residents and families to cool down from the summer heat.  Thanks to the Operations and Engineering teams, the agency was able to open several of our splash pads early to provide residents relief from the heatwave last month. Commissioner Arrigo thanked Director of Pool and Waterfront Safety Shawn DeRosa and his team for getting the waterfronts and pools ready to welcome visitors for the busy summer season.

### Lifeguard hiring

Commissioner Arrigo said that DCR is on track to once again have a full staff of lifeguards this year to ensure that beaches and pools are safe for the public to enjoy. He said there is still some need at Revere Beach and the pools in Chelsea and Lawrence, and said that if anyone knows of certified lifeguards who are looking for a great summer job, please urge them to go to mass.gov/lifeguard and apply.

### Preservation Month

In May, DCR recognized Preservation Month and the collective efforts in preserving historic buildings and sites across Massachusetts for over 120 years. The agency’s preservation staff works tirelessly with curators, non-profit groups, student service groups, and many friends groups to achieve its preservation mission. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Historic Curatorship Program and during that time, 24 curators have taken on the adaptive reuse and preservation of 24 properties, from Cape Cod to Mount Greylock. To date, curators have invested a combined $40 million in private funding into the historic buildings they’ve leased.

The program recognized the curators with a celebration at Mountainside Cafe, where they were presented with certificates from Governor Healey, recognizing their vision, dedication, and investments into DCR’s historic buildings.

### Envirothon

Last month, Commissioner Arrigo joined EEA Secretary Tepper at the annual Massachusetts Envirothon. He said it was inspiring to see the high school teams showcase their skills and present on clean energy for a sustainable future. The Commissioner thanked the more than 40 DCR staff who helped ensure the event was a success and Wachusett Regional Director and Envirothon Council Chair Kelley Freda for prioritizing everyone’s safety and evacuating when the weather started. He also acknowledged longtime supporter and DCR Forester Joe Perry, who recently passed away, saying his spirit was felt throughout the event.

### OSD Award

Last week, DCR’s Contracts and Procurement Team was honored at the 2023 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Awards for purchasing from the most Disability-Owned Businesses. Over the past year the agency has developed new tracking capabilities and communication protocols to ensure our contractors support minority, women, veterans, small businesses, and disabled-owned businesses. The dedication and innovative efforts have significantly contributed to promoting diversity and inclusion within DCR’s procurement processes, making a positive impact on the community and setting a commendable example for others to follow.

### Orientation week for of the Fellows

Commissioner Arrigo said that they are excited to begin the second year of the Conservation and Recreation Leadership Fellows with seven students from Salem State University.  Last week, the fellows began their 12-week program and had an action-packed orientation week, visiting Halibut Point State Park, Lawrence Heritage State Park, Walden Pond State Park, Camp Nihan, and the Commonwealth Archives to see DCR’s mission in action. The fellows will be paired with mentors in various disciplines to work on individual projects. This program aims to show college students the amazing employment opportunities available at DCR.

### Stewardship Corps Recognition in Fall River

Commissioner Arrigo said that they also celebrated the completion of the Fall River Stewardship Corps' 8-week program. Their stewardship project focused on planting a pollinator garden near the boardwalk. He thanked Laura Sapienza-Grabski for collaborating with the Fall River Boys and Girls Club and Fall River Heritage State Park staff, and for building on feedback from last year's corps to organize additional opportunities for students to explore various aspects of DCR.

### Quinsigamond Mishoon Burning

Last week, the Nipmuc community crafted a traditional charcoal dugout boat, known as a mishoon, at Lake Quinsigamond. This significant cultural event showcases traditional techniques and holds deep cultural importance for the tribe. Several DCR staff members worked closely with the Nipmuc Community to ensure the ceremony could be performed safely while honoring the tribe's cultural sovereignty. This collaboration reflects a commitment to respecting and preserving indigenous practices. The Nipmuc generously allowed DCR staff and the public to observe their practice, offering a unique opportunity for the community to witness and learn about an important aspect of the tribe's heritage.

### "Let’s Camp Massachusetts" Family Weekend

On Saturday, July 13, DCR will host a fun-filled, overnight, camping experience for families new to camping at Myles Standish State Forest in Plymouth. The Let’s Camp Massachusetts Family Camping Program is focused on the basics of camping and recreational skills to help families enjoy the outdoors in a safe, comfortable, and relaxed setting. To support this program, DCR received a $10,000 Bronco Wild Fund Grant. The grant helps to introduce 25 families to camping by providing essential equipment and activities like campfire cooking demonstrations, storytelling, nature walks, and fishing lessons.

### Growing Wild Events

This is the fourth year of Growing Wild Massachusetts, a program aimed at enhancing and preserving pollinator habitats statewide. Secretary Tepper, MDAR Commissioner Randle, and Commissioner Arrigo kicked off this year's program at Weston Nurseries in Lincoln to encourage customers to shop for native plants.  As part of the program, DCR, MDAR, and the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association have partnered with 17 local nurseries to offer free native pollinator garden starter kits. The kits include native plants and wildflower seeds, along with educational resources. In addition, there were pollinator kit giveaway events at six parks: Waquoit Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, Lawrence Heritage State Park, Middlesex Fells Reservation, Holyoke Heritage State Park, and Mount Greylock State Reservation. Over the past three years, DCR has distributed 5,825 kits, resulting in over six acres of pollinator habitat.

### UAP Fair

Commissioner Arrigo attended the annual Universal Access Program Adaptive Recreation Fair at Herter Park. The fair welcomes people from across the region to see the incredible adaptive equipment we use at DCR properties to ensure that people of all abilities have access to recreational opportunities.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Councilor Crane asked about diversity tracking and tools and asked if the model could be expanded to track things like how DCR is reducing greenhouse gases and using more local forest products.

Commissioner Arrigo agreed and said that the system was put in place to address the specific issue but that they are looking at what other systems can be created to better track things going forward. He said the ability for DCR to have systems in place and the right people supporting those systems, is critical. He said that for the Strategic Readiness Initiative and the Special Commission Report and tracking the progress on those, someone has committed to coming on as the Director of Strategic Readiness that will be announced soon.

Councilor Harper commented that she was excited to see all of the youth engagement being done by the Commissioner and DCR. She asked if there was a place where all of the activities being offered by DCR are collected in one place for people to view.

Commissioner Arrigo said that in a broad way, the DCR website needs a lot of work. He agreed that you have to dig find certain things and that they want to make it easier for people to access the information there.

Councilor Dooley commented that the signs about water quality at King’s Beach and Stacey’s Brook went up and were well received and thanked the Commissioner and staff for their work to get them. He also commented about how great the DCR social media is and how well it is received.

Councilor Jasinski commented that she appreciates hearing about the procurement process and the work that the team is doing, and thanked the Commissioner for sharing it with the council to show how DCR runs. She asked with lifeguard recruitment are they still offering higher hourly rates and bonuses and if that has helped with recruitment.

Commissioner Arrigo said that the pay has remained at the level it was last year and that the bonuses are still available to applicants. He said the structure of increased pay and bonuses has helped them attract and retain lifeguards, noting that a lot of the lifeguards are recurring employees.

Councilor Wilson asked about the Summer Nights program and if the program is gearing up.

Commissioner Arrigo said that yes, the program will be kicking off soon and that funding has been awarded to partners. He said there will be an announcement for it shortly.

Councilor Wilson asked about the 66 projects that had been on hold during Forests as Climate Solutions, of the 10 that are still paused and the nine that won’t proceed, she asked how many were under DCR’s purview.

Commissioner Arrigo said he can check but he is pretty sure that all of them are.

Councilor Wilson asked if they could hear about what about those projects caused them to not move forward sometime in the future.

Commissioner Arrigo said that they can go into it when a deeper briefing is given and give some of the reasons why they weren’t able to move forward.

Councilor Smiley asked if the hiring freeze will be lifted at the end of June.

Commissioner Arrigo said that its not a hiring freeze but rather, hiring controls have been put in place by the administration. He said that they have not heard that they will be lifted or loosened in the near future, but that DCR has been able to move forward with some of the hiring.

Chair Buckley commented about the procurement staff that was honored and said that the logistics support at an agency the size of DCR is really important and important that the people are recognized for their work. He said that once the Director of Strategic Readiness is in place, it would be great to have a presentation from them about what their vision is. In response to the report on forestry he said that he recently read about the Canadian Forestry Service doing clearcutting to prevent future wildfires and said that he mentions this because one of the things he thinks needs to be thought of is nimbleness to control forest land and to not get too prescriptive and to be able to respond to threats.

## Regular Business I

### Presentation on the Biodiversity Executive Order – Tom O’Shea, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game

Commissioner O’Shea presented to the council about the Healey Administrations executive order regarding biodiversity in Massachusetts.

### After the presentation concluded, Councilors were given the opportunity for questions and comments.

Councilor Collins said it was great to see the progress and focus. He said that he looks forward to presentations at future meetings about DCR’s role in adopting these goals as well.

Councilor Crane said that he was struck by Commissioner O’Shea saying that climate change is going to have effects that we cannot mitigate or prevent. He said it is sad to think about that but that it is the reality that we face and he appreciates the recognition that although this executive order is about saving biodiversity, its also about how biodiversity is going to adapt.

Councilor Jasinski said she would love to see a report on the goals and where the order goes.

Chair Buckley said that there are lots of tools that provide a vision like the executive order and MassWildlife’s Bio Map and he said it would be useful if there was a diagram that showed how all of the tools fit together. He said its important how the public perceives and understands how everything fits.

Commissioner O’Shea said that it is providing a future for goal setting from the administration and that everything else that has been done has been building towards this. He said that it is important to show where we’re headed and why this is important in a way that has been done with climate.

Chair Buckley said that there are some regulatory frameworks that were designed to review potential impacts and that there are sometimes hoops that need to be jumped through that can be simplified for people and that things that are climate smart and are subject to the same permitting framework can get held up.

Commissioner O’Shea said that they are currently working on this with the Secretary’s office and the Department of Environmental Protection and that progress is being made.

Councilor Collins said that the goal is to get back to a healthier, more resilient, more biodiverse state since a lot of biodiversity has already been lost. He also said that the 30 by 30 and 40 by 50 land protection goals are fantastic, and that Mass Audubon is all in on them. He said that they are seeing issues with tracking land conservation status with Mass GIS and that it is important to make an investment to improve that data.

Councilor Ortiz said that with neighborhood meetings, it is important to do presentations in other languages or if it is in English, to make sure that everyone will understand what is being spoken about to engage communities and make sure people attend.

Commissioner O’Shea said that they are working on a strategic plan which includes language access which goes beyond translation to making language accessible.

Chair Buckley asked how the aggressive land protection goals will be reconciled with the enormous push for increased housing for towns.

Commissioner O’Shea said that there was a land use planning map called for in the Clean Energy Climate Plan and that EEA is working on it. He said that there needs to be coordination with all the secretariats about where the priority areas are for these goals and a process to sort it out.

### Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 9, 2024 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Crane seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Abstain

The May 9, 2024 minutes were approved.

### Public Comment

[Guidelines for Public Comment are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website.](https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-stewardship-council-public-comment-guidelines/download)

Chairman Buckley invited members of the public for comment. Comments were offered by the following:

Alex Arriama

Meg Bandera, Unpaved Trails for All

Chris Egan, Massachusetts Forest Alliance

Paul Nutting, Dorchester

Andres Ripley, Neponset Watershed Association

Sarah Freeman, Jamaica Plain

## Regular Business II

### Committee Updates

#### Policy Committee

The committee did not meet in May, and the June meeting may move to accommodate Paul Cavanagh to talk about RMPs.

#### Stakeholders

The committee will meet on June 28 at 8am to review options on the listening session and review the schedule for meetings.

#### Conservation

The committee has not met, but Councilor Collins has spoken with DCR’s director of Natural Resources Eric Seaborn about the use of rodenticides on DCR property.

#### Finance

The committee was unable to hold a public listening session on the budget, but will use comments gathered from the Stakeholders Committee meeting to create a recommendation that will be presented at the July meeting.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Wilson said that she is grateful that Chair Buckley is okay after a medical issue and hopes that he takes the time he needs to recover.

Councilor Collins echoed Councilor Wilson’s point and welcomed Councilor Jasinski and thanked the organizations that helped contribute names to the list of candidates she was chosen from.

Chair Buckley again thanked Governor Healey for filling all the seats on the council.

## Adjournment

Councilor Smith moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Collins seconded.

Councilor Buckley thanked everyone for joining and adjourned the meeting.

Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council>