# **June Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Ted Dooley, Susan Smiley, Vivian Ortiz, Dennis Smith, Jeff Collins, Ann Canedy

Council Members Absent: Jennifer Wilson, Melissa Harper, Dicken Crane (attended via Zoom), Phil Doherty, Kevin O’Shea

DCR Staff Attendees: Brian Arrigo, Matthew Perry, Nick Connors, Paul Cavanagh

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Doug Pizzi, Mike Wood, Sarah Freeman, Heather Linscott, Chris Egan, Anna Gagnon, Lee Toma, Elisa Campbell, Chuck Anastas, Mike Duclos, Mike Manning, Bill Boles, Denis Laforce

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

Chair Buckley spoke about attending the Mass Conservation Voter’s event for the new group called Mass Parks for All. It is a non-partisan 501C-3 to raise money to help friend’s groups of DCR parks. He also spoke about his recent trip to Borderland State Park in Easton where he walked with a friend who just finished writing a book about the park and its former inhabitants, the Ames family. He reported that 44 people attended the Finance Committee’s budget listening session. He concluded by reporting that there is a presentation that was added to the agenda about the administrations new forestry practices plan and that he was invited to a meeting with Secretary Tepper and Climate Chief Hoffer the prior Monday to be briefed on the plans. He noted that forestry has been in front of the council repeatedly and that he felt it was important for the council to receive a presentation on it at this meeting instead of waiting a month.

## DCR Report – Brian Arrigo, Commissioner

Commissioner Arrigo thanked Chair Buckley and the rest of the council and said it has been a busy couple of weeks since they last met and that he has been on the road getting out to DCR properties and meeting staff.

### Summer Season

He told the council that the DCR summer season has officially begun and that many of the beaches and waterfronts across the state have opened with lifeguard staffing and are filling up with the recent warm weather. He noted that DCR is still actively recruiting lifeguards and are still offering $1,000 in bonuses for those who are hired and commit to staying the entire summer. He said that if you know of anyone who is a certified lifeguard and looking for a job to please encourage them to visit mass.gov/lifeguards for more information.

In addition to lifeguards, Commissioner Arrigo reported that DCR is also still looking for seasonal staff to work in our parks, beaches, campgrounds, golf courses, visitor centers and more, and that more information about seasonal park positions is available at mass.gov/dcr-employment.

### Greening the Gateway Cities Grants

Eight municipalities and two non-profit organizations were recently awarded $988,300 through the Greening the Gateway Cities (GGCP) Implementation Grant Program, and an additional $313,571 was awarded to 15 projects through the GGCP’s Partnership Grant Program. This $1.3 million is going to go toward planting trees in Gateway Cities across Massachusetts. Planting more trees in Gateway Cities helps shield environmental justice communities from the extreme heat driven by the climate crisis.Last year the Greening the Gateway Cities Program reached a milestone of 35,000 trees planted across the Commonwealth and DCR is ready to get back to work with its partners to create more urban tree canopies and green spaces in our communities that need them the most.

### Growing Wild

Last week Commissioner Arrigo was in Spencer at Bemis Farms and Nursery with Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi and MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle to kick off the third season of the Growing Wild initiative with Mass Department of Agricultural Resources and the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association.

The idea behind Growing Wild is to enlist residents in helping to create more native plant habitat all across Massachusetts. The program works with local nurseries to offer pollinator garden starter kits free of charge to customers. The kits contain two native pollinator friendly plants, a Growing Wild yard sign and a packet of native wildflower seeds and are available at 18 nurseries and garden centers across the state. DCR will also be hosting Growing Wild events at three DCR Park locations where you can pick up a starter kit, talk to staff about your garden and spend your day in the great outdoors. On June 7, an event was held at the Middlesex Fells and on June 8 two events were held at Mt. Greylock and at the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

### Seasonal Ranger Academy

The 2023 DCR Seasonal Ranger Academy was held at the end of May. In seven days of classroom and scenario-based instruction and one day of park-specific field training, attendees learned about a wide array of topics, including Constitutional Law/Bill of Rights, Ranger and Staff Authority, Park Rules and Regulations, Situational Awareness, Traffic Direction, Search and Rescue, All-Hazard Emergency Response, Public Assistance, Public Speaking, Radio Operations, Importance and Means of Communication, and Media/Press Relations. 16 rangers completed the 50-hour curriculum and are ready to be out in the field for the summer months.

### Salisbury Beach

After winter storm damage caused the closure of several access points at Salisbury Beach, DCR crews worked as quickly, safely, and efficiently as possible and were able to open Access Points 9 and 10 ahead of the Memorial Day Weekend.

Commissioner Arrigo reported that this was no small feat given permitting challenges, multidisciplinary coordination, and public scrutiny, but that staff rolled up their sleeves and got the job done.

He said that the reopening is a true testament to the partnership DCR has with the Town, the Merrimack River Beach Alliance, the legislative delegation, and the community. Governor Healey, who recognized the economic driver Salisbury Beach is to the region, went down to see the beach on her own and raised the urgency of reopening these ahead of the summer season, to the attention of Secretary Tepper and the Commissioner. DCR hopes to start construction on Access Point 8 next week, with the goal of reopening it in early July.

### Envirothon

On Thursday May 25, the Commissioner helped kick off the 36th annual Envirothon at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge. The Envirothon is a natural resource education program for Massachusetts high school students that emphasizes hands-on, team-oriented problem solving and community involvement. He congratulated Lexington High School for winning the event and said he was inspired by these young people who are dedicated to finding solutions to combatting the climate crisis, and to meeting our climate goals noting that they are future stewards of the land, and that he hopes they may someday join the ranks at DCR.

### Free Swim Lessons Grants

As part the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s commitment to water safety, DCR announced they’ve awarded 14 organizations throughout the state a total of up to $372,000 to provide free beginner swimming lessons to Massachusetts residents of all ages during the month of June. The funding is being awarded through DCR’s Safe Water Initiative Massachusetts (SWIM) program. Contracts were awarded to organizations whose instructors hold Red Cross Water Safety Instructor certification, or industry equivalent, and preference was given to applicants that serve environmental justice communities.

### Fire Activity

The Commissioner reported that it’s been an active spring wildfire season across Massachusetts, with DCR Forest Fire Control firefighters providing continuous assistance to municipal fire departments. He said he learned more about the forestry fire control work earlier this week from Dave Celino and Peter Church, and that the fire activity has been driven by continuous dry weather patterns of low humidity, warm temperatures and intermittent wind events with the added impact of long periods with little rain.  Year to date, there have been over 788 fires statewide with more than 1,427 acres burned. DCR continues to support detection efforts by manning fire towers on high fire danger days. When weather conditions DCR has played a pivotal role in achieving prescribed fire goals on DCR and DFW lands, including a prescribed burn in Myles Standish State Forest a couple weeks ago.

He added that because of the wildfires happening in Canada, DCR is coordinating with the Northeast Fire Compact to see if they can assist member province Quebec as they continue to battle several wildfires that are causing smoke to drift into our region and affect the air quality.

### New DCR Deputy Chief Fire Warden

Over the past six months DCR has undertaken the search and vetting process to fill the role of Deputy Chief Fire Warden within the DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry. This position has been vacant since the early 1990s. Increased demands and complexities of a changing wildfire dynamic, prescribed fire and fuels management, and community mitigation planning necessitate the need for stronger span of control and leadership support within the DCR Fire Program.

Commissioner Arrigo announced that Andrew Regan, currently the DCR District 5 Topsfield Fire Warden, has been chosen as the first Deputy Chief Fire Warden for DCR in almost 30 years and that he officially started on June 4th in his new role. He asked the Council to join him in congratulating Andy and welcoming him to his new role as the DCR Deputy Chief Fire Warden.

### Arborway Update

Commissioner Arrigo offered an update on the Arborway project in response to a public comment received at the previous Stewardship Council meeting.

This spring DCR met withnearly two dozen groups to collect final comments on a preferred design alternative for the parkway. DCR will complete these meetings by the end of June and the consultant Howard Stein Hudson will refine the preferred alternative to reflect stakeholder comments. DCR expects to present the final preferred alternative to the public in late summer and then move forward with design development. Also, this summer, DCR plans to make additional improvements to Murray Circle which is one of the busiest intersections in the DCR system. Today it is a rotary that struggles to process volume because traffic flow is interrupted by traffic signals near three of the four exits. DCR will add a second southbound vehicle travel lane between the rotary and the Arboretum traffic signal, which should keep the line of traffic from clogging the circle and freeing up circulation around the intersection.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Commissioner Arrigo asked if the council would like him to include a slideshow to his remarks to include pictures.

The Councilors agreed that they would like this.

Councilor Dooley commented that in Lynn and Swampscott at King’s Beach, bacterial issues are getting a lot of renewed attention and that he hopes to see DCR do more to alert the public of bacteria levels. He said he has heard from many in the area that are concerned to see people swimming at the beach that may not know about the bacteria issues.

Chair Buckley thanked Commissioner Arrigo for alerting him of the forestry announcement ahead of time to make sure that they did not need to learn about it through the media.

Commissioner Arrigo commented that he tries to have no surprises and that he learned about that during his time in municipal government.

## Legislative Update – Matthew Perry, Manager of Stewardship Programs and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Perry provided the following update to the Council on the state budget.

**2800-0100 – Operating Costs**

Gov: $6,630,306

Final House: $7,188,306 ($558,000 in earmarks, DCR funding $6,630,306)

Final Senate: $6,543,734

**2800-0101 – Watershed Management**

Gov: $2,136,595

Final House: $2,086,594 ($150,000 in earmarks, DCR funding $1,936,594)

Final Senate: $1,666,595 ($100,000 in earmarks, DCR funding $1,566,595)

**2800-0401 – Stormwater Management**

Gov: $499,762

Final House: $3,249,761

Final Senate: $3,249,762

*It is higher in House and Senate budgets because money was moved to different lines in H1.*

**2800-0500 – Beaches**

Gov: $965,282

Final House: $1,405,231

Final Senate: $965,282

**2800-0501 – Seasonals**

Gov: $24,385,117

Final House: $25,435,117 ($50,000 earmark)

Final Senate: $24,325,119

**2800-0700 – Dam Safety:**

Gov: $675,676

Final House: $735,676 ($60,000 earmarks)

Final Senate: $675,676

**2810-0100 – Division of Parks and Recreation**

Gov: $107,632,351

Final House: $103,087,782

Final Senate: $104,882,351

**2810-0122 – Special Projects**

Final House: $3,560,000

Final Senate: $2,838,500

*This line is specifically for earmarks.*

**2820-0101 – State House Rangers**

Gov: $2,692,063

Final House: $2,692,063

Final Senate: $2,692,063

**2820-2000 – Park way lights**

Gov: $4,330,000

Final House: $4,330,000

Final Senate: $3,730,000

### Conference Committee

The House and Senate appoint three members each to a "Conference Committee" to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate proposals. One member of the minority party must be appointed by each branch. The Conference Committee reports a final compromise bill to the House and Senate for a final vote of acceptance in each branch.

### Parks Caucus

DCR legislative staff is working with the Legislature’s Park Caucus to schedule a time for Commissioner Arrigo to go up to the State House to meet with members.

Councilor Smiley asked for a list of members in the Park Caucus and Mr. Perry said he would provide them to her.

## Regular Business I

### Presentation on the MassWildlife Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Eve Schluter, Assistant Director

Ms. Schluter gave a presentation on the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and its overlap with DCR.

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

Councilor Smiley asked how many plants and how many animals were part of the program.

Ms. Schluter said 173 animals 259 plants.

Councilor Smith asked Ms. Schluter to elaborate on the acquisition of land in South Carver that she mentioned.

She responded that she was referencing the property as an example of one that DCR and MassWildlife have identified together as agencies to acquire and manage.

Councilor Smith asked how many acres are being acquired a year.

Kurt Gaertner, Asst. Secretary for Environmental Policy at the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) responded that he doesn’t know exactly for individual agencies, but the Commonwealth acquires about 10,000 acres per year. He said that of the 10,000, about 4,000 is MassWildlife.

### Presentation on Forests as Climate Solutions, Kurt Gaertner, Asst. Secretary for Environmental Policy, EEA

Mr. Gaertner presented on the new forest management policies going into place and how they affect DCR.

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

Councilor Smiley asked if there was an impact on Article 97 because of the new policies.

Mr. Gaertner responded that the biggest affect will be more land brought under Article 97.

Councilor Smiley asked if these new policies will be taken into consideration when grants are given out to municipalities and other groups.

Mr. Gaertner said that land conservation dollars go to state agencies, municipalities, and non-profits, and that they need to decide what the criteria are and if any changes are needed. He said that as we perform forestry going forward, we will be looking at management guidelines, and that exceptions will be made for public safety.

Chair Buckley asked if the council could get periodic updates from the commissioner on the progress of the new guidelines. He also asked if fire has been taken into consideration with this, adding, in terms of using forests as carbon banks, how do we deal with fire.

Mr. Gaertner said he will ask experts, but that he expects prescribed burns to continue and that fire safety will be taken into account.

Chair Buckley said that he thought that the plan is comprehensive and great, but that one concern he has is that with all of the resources going into this, he would like to see matching resources going into DCR and a commitment to upgrading infrastructure. He said that at the end of the day if people don’t get into the environment they are less likely to protect it, and that people need to feel comfortable when they go to parks, noting that Massachusetts is last in the country in per capita spending for parks, and that it needs to be first.

Councilor Collins thanked Mr. Gaertner for his presentation saying that he thinks it’s a fantastic approach. He said that in terms of DCR he hopes that there will be increased staffing and resources to care for the land that will be added.

Mr. Gaertner said that doubling the pace of conservation requires more staff to acquire the land and to conserve it, and that more means more.

Councilor Smith asked if there can be another update on this topic in three to six months.

### Approval of Minutes

#### April

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the April minutes.

Councilor Dooley seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

#### May

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the May minutes.

Councilor Ortiz seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### 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, which was offered by the following:

* Denis Laforce, Sutton
* Doug Pizzi, Mass Conservation Voters
* Bill Boles, Sandwich
* Mike Duclos, Stowe
* Heather Lindscott, Adams
* Mike Manning, South Boston
* Sarah Freeman, Jamaica Plain
* Chris Egan, Mass Forestry Alliance
* Lee Toma, Boston

## Regular Business II

### Committee Updates

Policy

The committee met on May 30th and is still working on the Strategic Oversight Plan. The draft is being edited to have parallel formatting across the committees. The timeline for plan is for the committee to discuss it on June 27, present it to the full Council on July 13th, set up public comment for August, and approve it at the September Council meeting. Councilor Collins also reported that he is working with the environmental groups listed in statute to create the list of nominees to fill the open environmental seat on the council.

Stakeholders

The committee met on June 2nd and discussed working with stakeholders, municipal partnerships and MOUs with partners. They also discussed the possibility of an upcoming Friends Conference and how the committee can be part of discussions of it going forward.

Finance

The committee held a listening session on May 25th which 44 people attended. The focus of discussion was that DCR needs more resources and more people working for it. The committee is taking those comments and previous recommendations and putting them into a new recommendation for next year.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Smith thanked Mr. Perry for all he does for the Council. He asked if the agenda next month can include something related to the 2024 meeting schedule. He also asked if the councilors can get copies of the presentations from Ms. Schluter and Mr. Gaertner.

Chair Buckley said that if the schedule is finalized, maybe in six months there can be another joint meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Board.

Councilor Smith suggested that there can be a meeting at the new DCR space in the transportation that the Fish and Wildlife Board can be invited there.

## Adjournment

Councilor Ortiz made a motion to adjourn.

Councilor Dooley seconded the motion.

The Council adjourned until their next meeting on July 13, 2023.

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