# **November Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Jennifer Wilson, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Susan Smiley, Vivian Ortiz, Jeff Collins, Phil Doherty, Ted Dooley, Ann Canedy

Council Members Absent: Dennis Smith, Kevin O’Shea

DCR Staff Attendees: Brian Arrigo, Priscilla Geigis, Paul Cavanagh, Wendy Pearl, John Daly, Matthew Perry

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Sarah Freeman, Mike Duclos, Michael Norton, John Bescherer, Jen Ryan, Denis Laforce, Glen Ayers, Chuck Anastas, Buzz Constable, Bill Boles, Laura Jasinski, Chris Redfern, Chris Hirsch

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

Chair Buckley welcomed everyone to the meeting and did a roll call of councilors present. He then gave condolences to Councilor Dennis Smith and his family on the loss of his wife June. He then invited Commissioner Arrigo to give an update.

## DCR Report – Commissioner Brian Arrigo

Commissioner Arrigo thanked Chair Buckley and the Council. He then gave an update on recent activities at the agency.

### Story Map of Land Protection Accomplishments for FY23

Commissioner Arrigo started by talking about the work of DCR’s land protection team.  Last fiscal year, the land protection programs within the agency collectively protected nearly 1,450 acres of land. To better share information within DCR and to promote transparency, a centralized dashboard was created that provides an overview of each program’s annual accomplishments, with interactive maps, project highlights, and photos for anyone who wants to learn more about our acquisition and restriction stewardship efforts. The dashboard also highlights recent efforts to modernize DCR’s land records system and involved many staff from across the agency including Land Protection, Water Supply Protection, Legal, and Resource Protection staff.

[The Dashboard is available to view online.](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/51fb15b880cd4b71b0f6b3215a6a155a/)

### ResilientMass Plan

EEA recently  announced the [ResilientMass Plan](https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-releases-readiness-plan-to-protect-against-extreme-weather) which includes the first-ever 2022 Statewide Climate Assessment and ensures that Massachusetts is prepared to withstand, rapidly recover from, adapt to, and mitigate natural hazard events. This “living” plan reflects a whole-of-government approach to building resilience to climate change and includes about 130 state government adaptation actions. It’s critical that we all work together to ensure we have a more resilient future for generations to come.

Commissioner Arrigo thanked staff who contributed to this planning process via the Adaptation Work Group and [Sarah White](mailto:sarah.j.white@mass.gov) and [Celeste de Palma](mailto:celeste.depalma@mass.gov) from DCR’s Office of Climate Resilience for their leadership.

### Recommendations from the Climate Chief

In addition to the ResilientMass plan, Climate Chief Hoffer released a new report entitled “Recommendations from the Climate Chief.” The report contains 39 recommendations for how the state can zero-out carbon emissions by 2050, build more clean energy, and prepare for more severe weather. The recommendations take a statewide approach and aim to take Massachusetts from planning for climate change to taking action on it.

Commissioner Arrigo said that DCR is mentioned as part of the plan in relation to its work to better protect environmental justice communities from the impacts of climate change by increasing urban tree canopies. He added that as the state’s largest landowner, DCR has a real obligation to lead in the effort to fight climate change, and that they are committed to doing just that.

### Metro Beaches Commission Hearing

On October 31, Commissioner Arrigo spoke at a hearing of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, which was created by the Legislature to take an in-depth look at the Boston metropolitan region's 15 DCR-managed public beaches in Nahant, Lynn, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy, and Hull. He said that DCR shares the commission’s goal of ensuring that metropolitan beaches are welcoming places for all of our residents, regardless of their race, ability, language or income, adding that one way they’re doing this is by expanding multilingual signage at beaches. DCR is also looking to a new environmental justice mapping tools that its team has designed that will allow to better understand the language access needs of the communities that are surrounding properties and beaches, as they build and install more accessible signage. Universal Access Program director Tom McCarthy joined Commissioner Arrigo at the hearing to talk about DCR’s commitment to making beaches accessible to people of all abilities. He highlighted that the program has invested more than $300,000 in new beach wheelchairs and beach mats which helps people with limited mobility enjoy the beaches.

### Clippership Connector Groundbreaking

On November 2, Commissioner Arrigo joined officials from the City of Medford for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Clippership Connector. The new waterfront trail is nearly a decade in the making and will connect over 10 miles of contiguous greenways through the Mystic River Reservation. DCR has invested nearly $750,000 in the design and permitting of the project and the construction is an additional $4 million investment in DCR trails funded through ARPA. This project is a partnership between DCR, the City of Medford, the Mystic River Watershed Association, WalkMedford and the Solomon Foundation. It is anticipated that construction on the greenway will be completed by 2025.

### Head of the Charles Regatta

The annual Head of the Charles Regatta was held on October 20 through the 22. The regatta is DCR’s second biggest event of the year, after the Fourth of July, and making this event successful takes an incredible amount of teamwork. Despite the rain, thousands turned out to watch the event and cheer on the teams of rowers that come from around the world to compete. Commissioner Arrigo thanked the agency’s special events team, operations team, and Rangers for all of the work they put into making the regatta a success year after year.

### Be Kind! Kick Off Event

Commissioner Arrigo joined the Friends of the Fells, the Friends of the Blue Hills, Sen. Jason Lewis, Rep. Paul Donato, and Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian for the launch of the Be Kind! public awareness campaign. The Stewardship Council saw a presentation on the campaign during the April 2023 Stewardship Council meeting. The campaign is designed to ensure our parks are welcoming spaces for all visitors – whether they are hiking, biking, or walking their dog, and the event marked the kickoff of a series of programming and activities that suggest actions everyone can take in our parks including listening for other people on trails and making space to pass; keeping dogs leashed outside of designated off-leash areas; leaving no trace of litter or dog waste; and staying on the trails – on foot, paw, or bike. These actions appear on signage displayed at trailheads throughout the Fells and Blue Hills Reservations. The hope is that this campaign and its sentiment will be taken up by other Friends groups and spread to many other parks across the Commonwealth.

### Friends of the Blue Hills Celebration

On October 19, Commissioner Arrigo joined more than 100 people at the Friends of the Blue Hills Annual Celebration where he delivered the keynote address. He also thanked outgoing Friends of the Blue Hills Executive Director Judy Lehrer Jacobs for her 19 years of dedication to making the Blue Hills a welcoming place for all our visitors.

### Asian Longhorned Beetle Strategy Meeting

Last month, DCR representatives participated in a national Asian long-horned beetle (ALB) strategy meeting hosted at the ALB Program Office in West Boylston.  State and federal representatives from the four eradication programs (Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and South Carolina) provided updates on accomplishments and challenges, discussed survey and treatment policy, and heard from researchers about the latest studies and risk models. The information gained from the collaboration will be integrated into DCR’s Worcester ALB Eradication Program to help us accomplish the agency’s ultimate goal of eradicating this invasive species from Massachusetts.

### Ryan Wading Pool

Earlier this week, DCR broke ground on construction of the new Ryan Wading Pool in Mattapan. Improvements being made will double the size of the wading pool, create new spray features, benches, shade, and rinsing station, and will include a rubber surface around the pool. This project was made possible through the passion of the community and the partnership of Rep. Fluker Oakley, who helped ensure the project meets the needs of the community.

The construction is a $2.5 million investment which will be followed by upgrades to the playground, parking area, trail connections, park entrance and internal circulation and the Ryan Park Field, including modifications to the Ryan Bath House. The new wading pool is anticipated to open in Summer 2024.

### Blue Hills and Quabbin Deer Hunts

The annual Blue Hills Deer Hunt began this week and will continue throughout the month on Mondays through Thursdays – ending on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. The Blue Hills Deer Hunt is in its ninth year and has successfully helped reduce deer densities to sustainable levels. It is an 11-day permitted archery hunt in select areas of the Blue Hills Reservation. Approximately 191 have registered and been issued their doe tags for the hunt. The Blue Hills remains open during the hunt and we encourage visitors to wear bright clothing.

Next month, DCR is extending the Quabbin Hunt into Quabbin Park. The Quabbin deer hunt has taken place since 1991 and will expand into Quabbin Park this year in response to growing concern about the impacts of deer browsing on forest regeneration and the potential long-term consequences of those impacts on water quality. DCR previously proposed the expansion into Quabbin Park in 2019 and had selected 96 hunters to participate. This hunt was ultimately cancelled but was revisited for this year. DCR agreed to permitting those 96 hunters if they were still interested when the hunt takes place this year. As of last week, 82 hunters have committed. The approved hunt will be December 4-5. Quabbin Park will be closed to the public those days and notice to the public is being provided. The Hunt will be held annually until deer numbers are at a level that allow for sufficient forest regeneration.

### Forests as Climate Solutions

Commissioner Arrigo reported that EEA will be holding a second public input session for the Forests as Climate Solutions initiative on November 14 from 6:30 – 8:30pm on Zoom. This session is an opportunity to hear updates about the process from EEA and for the public to provide input.

### Veteran’s Day

On Friday November 10th, Saturday the 11th, and Sunday the 12th, DCR will honor Veterans Day by waiving parking fees both in parking lots and on streets, and by canceling street sweeping to encourage everyone, especially our veterans, to take a day and enjoy one of DCR’s parks. Commissioner Arrigo said that waiving parking fees for Veterans Day is a small way the agency can honor the service and sacrifices of former and current military members and encourage visitors to experience these important sites. He encouraged everyone at the meeting to take advantage and to visit one of our parks this weekend, especially one of our many veterans’ memorials, military forts, and other historically important sites.

### Walk-in Camping

The Commissioner told the council that DCR's camping program staff is aware of the recent comments regarding the no turn away policy for campgrounds established in 2013.

He clarified that this policy is an emergency safeguard, when mechanical issues or weather impedes a touring cyclist or hiker's schedule, and they must seek alternative camping accommodations at the last minute and is not a substitute for proper planning. Reservations should be made prior to 2 p.m. on date of arrival, if not sooner, via massdcrcamping.reserveamerica.com or 877-422-6762. He noted that all large groups of ten or more should coordinate with [dcr.campinginfo@mass.gov](mailto:dcr.campinginfo@mass.gov) prior to embarking on their journey to ensure that space is available for their group.

### Golf

Commissioner Arrigo said that Mr. Perry has been working with Jim Burke, Golf Operations Manager at DCR, to create a presentation that will be given to the council at an upcoming meeting about operations at the agency’s two golf courses: Leo J. Martin and Ponkapoag.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Councilor Collins commented that the story map of land acquisition and ResilientMass initiative are great, and asked if the ResilientMass plan could be used as a framework for updates to the council on a quarterly basis. He brought up the “30 by 30” goal of protecting 30% of Massachusetts’ land by the year 2030 and how it ties into the agency’s land protection effort. He said in order to meet these goals, all groups that protect land will have to double or triple the pace of conservation, so he is interested in hearing how the agency will be prioritizing that. He also mentioned the presentation from Community Rowing Inc. during the September meeting and asked if the council could hear where the updates to CRI’s shared parking lot sit on the list of capital projects.

Commissioner Arrigo responded that he is meeting and site visit with CRI coming up.

Councilor Wilson commented that she was able to attend the Be Kind! campaign kickoff and that she thought it was fantastic. She said that she is glad the council had the presentation about the program and that she wants to look for opportunities for this to be implemented at other parks. She also brought up the deer hunt at the Quabbin and said that she recalled some resistance in Western Mass to the deer hunt and over time has come around on it. She asked if there were any requests pending regarding the hunt.

Commissioner Arrigo said yes, and that he is still learning about deer hunts, but he is open to having the conversations regarding the hunts.

Councilor Crane asked about pilot reform in communities that have a lot of state-owned land in them. The program pays communities for tax dollars that are lost due to state-owned land, but Councilor Crane said that with land conservation increasing in the state, towns are not getting the same amount of money as they would through tax dollars. He said this is especially true for towns in Western Mass that already have a lot of state-owned land in them.

Commissioner Arrigo said that his comments and feedback were helpful, and that one of the important pieces of moving forward on land protection is thinking about municipal impacts and how they can be mitigated.

Chair Buckley brought up the use of data when managing parks. He asked what kinds of data DCR uses for park management and decision making.

Commissioner Arrigo said that he appreciates the question, and that in his prior work as mayor, he found data driven decision making to be critical. He suggested a presentation by DCR’s AMP team. HE said that he is fully committed to data-driven decision making.

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

Mr. Perry elaborated on the recommendations of the Climate Chief that Commissioner Arrigo spoke about in his report. He told the council what the sections including DCR said.

## Regular Business I

### Department of Ecological Restoration Dam Removal Presentation – Chris Hirsch, Ecological Restoration Specialist

Mr. Hirsch presented to the council about his work in removing dams in Massachusetts through the Dvision of Ecological Restoration at the Department of Fish and Game.

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

Councilor Collins asked how the dam removal program works with DCR’s Office of Dam Safety and if there was anything from Mr. Hirsch’s perspective from a regulatory role to educate or promote dam removal and restoration.

Mr. Hirsch said that there is a baseline of communication between the agencies, and that they talk about projects and the status of dams in the state. He said they are looking to enhance coordination between agencies in the near term. He added that the Office of Dam Safety is one of the key drivers of motivating dam removal.

Commissioner Arrigo added that he and Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Tom O’Shea meet monthly and have identified dams as an area of collaboration.

Chair Buckley commented that it should also be a priority of EEA Secretary Tepper.

Commissioner Arrigo said that it is something that the Secretary has prioritized especially in light of the recent flooding in the city of Leominster.

### Approval of Minutes

Councilor Canedy made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 12, 2023 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Smiley seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor Dooley: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

The October 12, 2023 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, which was offered by the following:

* Glen Ayers, Greenfield
* Bill Boles, Sandwich

## Regular Business II

### Presentation of the South Coast Resource Management Plans, Paul Cavanagh, Resource Management Planner

Mr. Cavanagh presented the nine Resource Management Plans (RMPs) from the South Coast region. He also gave a brief update on the program. The RMPs will be voted on by the council at the December 14, 2023 meeting.

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

Councilor Wilson thanked Mr. Cavanagh for his work and presentation. She said that the Policy Committee has been meeting with Mr. Cavanagh and that Mr. Perry has also helped connect the council with the ongoing work on the RMPs. She noted that the council now has a month to go over the plans, and if there are any topics or points that need to be addressed, they can be sent to Mr. Cavanagh or Mr. Perry.

Chair Buckley thanked the Policy Committee for their work with Mr. Cavanagh on the RMPs.

### Conservation Committee

Councilors Collins and Crane have been working on a charge for a new Conservation Committee. Councilor Collins thanked Councilor Crane for his work and thanked the Policy Committee for putting the consideration of the new committee forward. He said that the goal of the committee is to have a subset of the council that will work with DCR staff and members of the public to pay attention to and elevate to the whole council DCR’s conservation efforts. The language for the new committee was shared with councilors before the meeting. Councilor Collins said that he would like to participate in this committee, and that Councilor Crane would like to as well, noting that they hope to have at least three members.

Councilor Crane said that the committee is an opportunity to schedule staff from DCR and other pertinent agencies such as the Department of Environmental Protection and MassWildlife to get information on the status of natural resources and what is impacting them, and for the public to hear how these issues are being looked at.

Councilor Harper asked how the council will balance having a committee with an intentional focus on conservation and also keep in mind the role that the council plays with recreation.

Councilor Crane said that the conservation of natural resources are an asset to the recreational benefits of users, saying that it won’t be separating the two attributes of DCR, but brings them together.

Councilor Collins agreed with Councilor Crane adding that the Stakeholders Committee focuses on how groups and communities use DCR lands.

Chair Buckley said that committees serve as smaller venues for things to be discussed that can then be brought to the full council.

Councilor Harper said that the other committees that exist right now are functional, each addressing a piece of DCR’s mission. She said that this new committee is a different approach than what has been done in the past for committees.

### Approval of Creation of Conservation Committee

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the Conservation Committee.

Councilor Canedy seconded the motion.

Councilor Wilson commented that to Councilor Harpers point, the more functional committees need to be fully staffed, so the Conservation Committee can be looked at as extra credit.

### Roll Call on Approval of the Conservation Committee

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor Dooley: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

The Conservation Committee was approved.

### Committee Updates

Policy

Councilor Wilson said that the meeting has covered most of what the committee has been working on.

Stakeholders

Councilor Smiley said that the committee deferred its November meeting. She said that they are looking at locations for 2024 meetings, and that they are anxious to host the new director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation and reschedule the Friends and Partners meeting.

Finance

Chair Buckley said that the committee met with the new Director of Administration and Finance, Kerry Harrison, earlier in the week. He said that it was a get to know you meeting and that Ms. Harrison is a great addition to DCR staff. The committee would like to focus on the capital budget process and timing and to identify opportunities for the council to work on the capital budget similar to how it works on the operational budget. He said that they are looking to get an update on the dashboard for capital projects.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Harper commented that she thinks the Stakeholders Committee take a look at how the council and DCR keep relationships with Friends groups.

Councilor Collins said that he was looking at the story map of land acquisition and that he was impressed by it and the platform it is on.

Councilor Smiley thanked Mr. Cavanagh for his presentation on the South Coast RMPs.

Councilor Dooley said that Mr. Perry has been helping with issues related to King’s Beach, and that he thinks more can be done to address some of the health and water bacteria issues there, including communicating them to the public year-round.

## Adjournment

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>