



Stewardship Council

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Statement of the DCR Stewardship Council on the DCR Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has again proven its commitment to visitors of the Commonwealth's 150+ state parks and reservations by keeping state parks open, accessible and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, state parks have become one of the few places where all people, in all corners of the Commonwealth, could travel to find sanctuary for the mind and body during this stressful, unprecedented public health emergency.

DCR Field Operations staff supported by the central office and secretariat ably managed through the daily changes and uncertainties of the pandemic. As temperatures early in the pandemic soared to summer levels, DCR recorded an unprecedented and sustained surge in visitation levels that unwittingly created its own health and safety challenges—from congested trails to parking lots spilling over to main roads. This off-season surge required nimble action and collaboration across DCR to set policies into motion to educate visitors and protect public health.

DCR Rangers played a particularly valuable role in educating park visitors while also helping to reduce spread, all the while continuing to provide security at the Massachusetts State House.

The chapter to come will be one of creating sustained connections with the newest visitors to state parks—forged not just out of necessity but also sustained by a shared love of these special places.

The Stewardship Council expresses its commendation and gratitude to Secretary Katie Theoharides, Commissioner Jim Montgomery, and their respective teams for superlative work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Stewardship Council also expresses its appreciation to Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors for serving as a key conduit between DCR and the Council during this challenging time.

Approved by the DCR Stewardship Council, September 10, 2020