

Walden Pond SP Bathhouse and Accessibility Improvements  
Public Comments  
*deadline 12/11/2019*

Time	Comment	Name (First)	Name (Last)	Email Adress	Address	City	State	Zip
11/25/19 4:12 PM	<p>Is a drinking water fountain and bottle filler planned? Either a freestanding unit similar to the inoperable one now near the water's edge or a unit mounted on the exterior of the bathhouse would be suitable.</p> <p>Thanks,</p> <p>Janet Rothrock Chair, Concord on Tap</p>	Janet	Rothrock	jrothrock@hyraxes.com	618 Annursnac Hill Rd	Concord	MA	01742-5430

## Walden Pond SP Bathhouse and Accessibility Improvements

### Public Comments

deadline 12/11/2019

Time	Comment	Name (First)	Name (Last)	Email Adress	Address	City	State	Zip
12/11/19 1:02 AM	<p>The notification for this meeting was so scant as to be nearly invisible: ONE posting at the desk INSIDE the Visitors' Center at Walden. Where were the postings on the numerous bulletin boards, window near the bathroom, electronic board near Walden entrance? There were none.</p> <p>A few citizens were notified via an email list. There were no notifications in local media or at local shops or cafes. This is an immensely IMPORTANT project that may well alter the entire nature of Walden Pond. Citizens deserve the right to be heard in a well-publicized Preliminary Public meeting. One can be forgiven for concluding that a true representation of public opinion was not desired, as it was not sought. Due to a snowstorm, the "first" Preliminary meeting was very poorly attended and should have been canceled. The second was very poorly publicized. Many concerned citizens were never informed about this Nov. 19 meeting.</p> <p>Please schedule a further PRELIMINARY meeting, one that is WIDELY and openly publicized, and includes an alternate bad-weather date, BEFORE any bulldozers and loggers arrive at Walden. Let the public speak.</p> <p>A few concerns, excerpted from a longer submission:</p> <p>50 Trees will be cut down, among them ancient denizens of Walden. Thoreau would be angry, and many of us share that sentiment. Surely a path with a gentler slope and an updated bathhouse can be built without cutting down our ancients and opening up Walden to more traffic noise, danger from erosion, etc.</p> <p>"In wilderness is the preservation of the world". Thoreau did NOT say, "In a landscaped, highly controlled park ..." but "In WILDERNESS". Keep Walden Wild. Honor Thoreau.</p> <p>We do NOT need more buildings (why keep the old bathhouse for an "outlook"?), and an entire landscaped east side. We need the opportunity to experience WILDERNESS—a benefit particularly valuable to those living in nearby urban environments.</p> <p>Seek REAL public input. Protect precious wilderness. Keep Walden Wild!</p>	Jan	Outcalt	janowalden@yahoo.com	375 Acorn Park Dr, Apt 5104	Belmont	MA	02478

Walden Pond SP Bathhouse and Accessibility Improvements  
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Time	Comment	Name (First)	Name (Last)	Email Address	Address	City	State	Zip
12/11/19 1:27 AM	<p>We need a further WELL PUBLICIZED Preliminary meeting. Let the public speak! Keep Walden Wild.</p> <p>We have massive creativity and knowledge in our communities. Let's truly INVITE the public, and get this invaluable input. This meeting was VERY poorly publicized. If public input is sought, we need a properly publicized meeting.</p> <p>Protect our wise ancients, our 100 year old trees. Do NOT cut down 50 trees in search of a gentler path. Creative solutions can be found. We need their wisdom, beauty, their deep roots to stabilize our hillside. SAVE the ancients!</p> <p>We do NOT need more "civilization" encroaching on Walden, either in the form of more noise from Rt 126 (loss of trees means more noise, views of cars rushing by) or more buildings at the east end. Why not build a new bathhouse on the same footprint as the old? We do not need an entire landscaped, constructed east entry to Walden. Thoreau celebrates nature, and WILDERNESS, not landscaped suburban parks. We need a chance to RETURN to nature, to learn from wilderness. We do NOT need a constant reminder: "Oh but don't forget-- civilization is in control".</p> <p>Let's find a better solution for our disabled citizens: the opportunity to truly experience Walden's magic and wildness. A paved path cutting through a large section of Walden's small acreage, leading to a pile of rocks at a house site is not what I would seek, when my hip is hurting. An opportunity to experience the magic and beauty of Walden, yes. Maybe a volunteer corps for simple boat rides, short jaunts (in trail-worthy wheelchairs) to a quiet place to observe wildlife. A chance for a gentle swim, a chat, a place to read or sketch. Most of the friends I have who use wheelchairs would not attempt the long trek to the house site. Invite the public, and let's brainstorm.</p> <p>How will our precious wildlife be impacted? On behalf of my wild friends: Walden is their home. We are but visitors. Let us not destroy their homes. Keep Walden Wild!</p>	Jan	Outcalt	janowalden@yahoo.com	375 Acorn Park Dr, Apt 5104	Belmont	MA	02478

## Walden Pond SP Bathhouse and Accessibility Improvements

### Public Comments

deadline 12/11/2019

Time	Comment	Name (First)	Name (Last)	Email Address	Address	City	State	Zip
12/11/19 5:01 PM	<p>Disabled people have rights, but that shouldn't be more important than the preservation of natural wilderness. I'm surprised we are even considering a paved asphalt pathway through the woods. This goes against everything I thought we all agreed upon for this special place that is considered a wilderness sanctuary. Why hasn't the Thoreau Society immediately debunked such a heinous proposition? In his own writings Henry remarked at the strange phenomenon of an occasional passing train which intruded into the tranquility of nature. Now DCR wants to build an artificial access to his house site?! He would be rolling over in his grave! And more structures are to be installed around the bathhouse with the necessary removal of significant trees? Why did we have to endure decades of horrible fences enclosing the pond path in the name of erosion control to preserve the existing vegetation if now they are going to deliberately destroy the ecology of an entire hillside?! This new construction proposed for Walden Pond would change the face of the place and ruin it forever. Everything is fine as it is. There's no need to do more than renovate the old bathhouse and repair the decrepit stairs leading down to it. If there are funds available, why not use that for some sensible improvements and maintain what is already there? For example: repair collapsed stone steps which provide points of access around the pond. Or plant new trees around the pond to replace those lost in storms. The luxurious visitor center was not necessary. We don't need any more construction that will permanently mar this poor abused pond. Greater lake access? Open up White Pond.</p> <p>I also would not advocate a plan to install elevators which could make the summit of Mt Everest accessible to the physically impaired. Review other examples of scenic beauty and modes of access which are offered: at Cranes Beach, staff use ATVs to transport disabled individuals. Let's brainstorm! Thank you for your attention!</p>	Erec	Sanders	ebogi2000@gmail.com	280 Concord Avenue	Lexington	MA	02421

THE WALDEN WOODS PROJECT  
friends of  
*Walden Pond*

13 November 2019

Mr. Jim Montgomery  
Acting Commissioner  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Commonwealth of MA  
251 Causeway Street  
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Commissioner Montgomery:

As you may know, the DCR designated the Walden Woods Project as the Friends of Walden Pond group. The Friends of Walden Pond strongly supports the Department's plan for accessibility improvements at Walden Pond State Reservation. We applaud the goals of improving access to the pond shore, bathhouse facilities, and Thoreau's house site. This flagship of the Massachusetts State Parks system deserves no less.

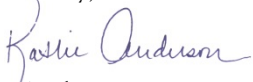
The Friends supports the house site trail plan that follows Walden Street (Route 126) and enters the woods on the existing woodland path (fire road) located opposite the former "Walden Breezes" entry. We feel that this route is far preferable to alternatives that have been considered and that would have involved greater impacts to the topography and forest vegetation surrounding Walden Pond. We are anxious to see construction details, including surface material and specific route details near Wyman Meadow and the vernal pool at the house site, but, in general, we support the Department's plan on this access improvement.

We also support the Pond Access Path and Bathhouse as currently proposed. The plan addresses the imperative to provide access to all visitors, continues the long-term restoration along the Walden Pond trail system, and remediates a number of existing deficiencies that affect water quality and visitor experiences. The proposed boardwalk does require some impact to existing tree canopy, but we acknowledge that proposed cutting has been minimized to the extent that is feasible, and will be mitigated with new plantings following construction. We feel that the path achieves a vital function while creating an aesthetic feature that should blend well with the environment and greatly enhance the visitor experience for all. The bathhouse will be a marked improvement over the existing block structure that dominates views from the pond and its shore.

We are happy to note that the accessibility improvements proposed in this project will have an ancillary effect of improving water quality by reducing concentrated run-off along the existing emergency access route, and are pleased that the proposal minimizes disturbance to existing grades in the project footprint. We are concerned about the current status of the boat ramp parking area, and note that further design of parking spaces and drainage control structures is needed.

We trust that the DCR will work to protect and restore forest canopy to the greatest extent feasible while addressing long-standing accessibility deficiencies at Walden Pond State Reservation, and we look forward to a continued role in ensuring the protection of this nationally-significant treasure.

Respectfully,



Kathi Anderson, Executive Director  
Walden Woods Project



16 November 2019

Mr. Jim Montgomery  
Interim Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Commissioner Montgomery

The Walden Pond State Reservation Advisory Board wishes to express its support for the Department's developing plans for construction of an accessible path and bathhouse replacement at Walden Pond State Reservation. This project, as envisioned, will address important issues of accessibility and visitor services while protecting the Pond and its adjacent landscape.

The Advisory Board supports the design for the proposed accessible path which will connect the street level to the beach area. The plans incorporate detailed measures for the protection of existing vegetation and topography. A program of remedial measures are incorporated such as revegetation of areas where pavement is removed and new plantings to replace trees that are of poor quality or removed due to the boardwalk alignment. Furthermore the elevated boardwalk's structure, width, and railing details are designed to minimize its visual impact on the Pond setting.

With regard to the bathhouse project, the Advisory Board supports the proposed bathhouse design which will replace the existing structure that is functionally deficient and visually imposes itself on the Pond environment. The proposed single level structure resolves issues of accessibility and through its siting and use of natural wood materials will be much less visible when viewed from the Pond and pond-side paths. As in the case of the path plans, plans for the bathhouse will incorporate extensive measures to safeguard the Pond's water quality.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the accessible path and bathhouse project.

Yours truly,



Kenneth E. Bassett, Chairman  
Walden Pond State Reservation Advisory Board

37 Page Road  
Lincoln, Ma. 01773

16 November 2019

Mr. Jim Montgomery  
Interim Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Commissioner Montgomery:

The Walden Pond State Reservation Advisory Board supports the Department's proposal for improving universal accessibility between the Visitor Center area and the Thoreau House Site. The Advisory Board has closely monitored the evolution of the plans and believes the selected route will minimize disturbance to cultural and natural resources, due in large part through the reuse of an existing path along Route 126 and reuse of an existing woodland trail (fire road).

As proposed, the design of the accessibility improvements conforms to US Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines and as such have a greater ability to fit into the existing wooded landscape. Added benefits of the project include restoration of eroded trails in the area of the house site, elimination of drainage structures that detract from the setting, and potential reduction of pedestrian traffic impacts on the Pond side path.

In combination we see the project components as beneficial to all Walden visitors and in particular those with mobility issues. The Advisory Board urges the Department to move forward to implementation on this much needed improvement.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth E. Bassett".

Kenneth E. Bassett, Chairman  
Walden Pond State Reservation Advisory Board  
37 Page Road  
Lincoln, MA 01773

677-626  
1357

From: Jan Outcalt  
375 Acorn Park Drive, Apt. 5104  
Belmont, MA 02478

Date: Dec. 11, 2019

Subject: Walden Pond SP Bathhouse and Accessibility Improvements

Dear DCR and public at large,

My "comment" is a two-part focus. The first regards the need for an additional Preliminary Public meeting. The second, expresses just some of my concerns and questions regarding this project.

A. Need for Additional Preliminary Public Meeting(s)

To DCR: Please plan at least one more Preliminary Public Meeting, with full public notification well in advance, and with an alternate weather date provided. This Preliminary Meeting is extremely urgent, and should be held prior to a move to any "Final" stage meetings and/or the beginnings of any outdoor work related to this project at Walden Pond.

This is an extremely important project, one which will permanently change the landscape at Walden. There will be serious repercussions, some positive, and some clearly demanding further review and real public input from a wide sector. There should be no rush to undertake a project which may profoundly change the very nature of Walden Pond without making every effort to engage as many members of the public as possible.

An example of these serious repercussions (cited in Part B of my comment): The entire East/Rte 126 side of Walden Pond will be more open, with building construction given a greater footprint and large trees (a total of 50 for the project, we've been told) removed. This will increase noise from Route 126, and diminish the potentially life-altering wilderness experience visitors seek when visiting Walden Pond. This may also destroy the stability and ecology of the entire east hillside.

The first Preliminary public meeting for this Walden Project was held during a snowstorm January 30, 2019. I personally attempted to attend the meeting, but the dangerously slick condition of the roads forced me to turn back. Very few members of the public were able to attend this meeting. Given the snowstorm, why was this meeting not cancelled and rescheduled for a later date?



I and others attempted to obtain information about any planned subsequent meetings. We were unable to find concrete plans for a subsequent Preliminary meeting.

It turns out there was a second public (actually the first and ONLY, due to the previous storm) Preliminary Meeting, held November 19, 2019. The notification for this meeting was so scant as to be nearly invisible. There are multiple bulletin boards at Walden Pond, and multiple accepted notification locations. These include: windows and doors near/in the bathrooms in the Visitor Center, posting boards in the short path from the parking lot to the main crossing at Rte. 126, at the top of the hill in front of the ramp to the Main beach, (a large bulletin board is located here) and other locations. Multiple notices for events are normally posted in these areas. There is even a very large electronic bulletin board which announces "No Pets", new closing times and other information, situated at the entrance to Walden Pond.

In the case of this extremely important meeting, only ONE paper notice was posted, and that was inside the visitor center, at the desk. Most regular and semi-regular visitors, many of whom are eager to provide input regarding this project at a Preliminary public meeting, rarely enter the Visitor Center. One might seek help for a lost item, or stop by to see a brand new exhibit. Otherwise most visitors, regular and otherwise, A. Stop to use the bathroom (if needed), B. Head to the main Rte. 126 crosswalk and C. Cross 126 and take the ramp down to the pond.

I have spoken with a significant number of "regular" and not so regular visitors who had no idea at all that this Nov. 19 meeting was planned. All were extremely disappointed to have been deprived of the opportunity to share heartfelt, creative, intelligent input at a public meeting. A "public meeting" should seek input from the public, by first being widely publicized.

We understand that an email was sent out to some members of the Walden community. This was helpful to those on the email list. But the list is limited to a very small percentage of the many citizens who are concerned about this development at Walden Pond.

I receive regular notifications from several community and media sites in Concord. In the weeks prior to Nov. 19th, I received many notices regarding upcoming fairs and local public meetings, but absolutely nothing about this extremely important meeting regarding massive change to Walden Pond.

One can be forgiven for concluding that perhaps widespread public input was not desired. If it was truly sought, then why post only ONE notice in an obscure location at Walden Pond? The DCR is not known to skimp on signs at Walden, for other events, or for simple instructions. At one point I counted more than 150 signs posted between the entrance to Walden and Thoreau's Cove. Why skimp on this extremely important

event? Why not post in various local media sites? Why no notice on the large Electronic Bulletin Board at the entry to Walden Pond?

Those of are who are very distressed to have missed this extremely important event due to a lack of public notification, request that this serious oversight be rectified as soon as possible by offering an additional Preliminary Public Meeting, with full public notification at Walden and elsewhere, well in advance of the event. An alternative "snow/weather date" should be included in the announcement. This meeting must be held prior to any "Final" meeting, and months ahead of any planned ground-breaking on this project at Walden. It should be planned for a convenient date and time following the holidays (early to mid-January), again, with an alternate "snow date" included.

The importance of the need for this meeting cannot be over-emphasized. The very devoted Walden community includes architects, artists, lawyers, journalists, working people of all stripes, and denizens ranging from insightful teens to 90+ senior citizens eager to offer the wisdom of their age.

Please do not deprive these citizens or Walden itself of the opportunity to receive such creative, knowledgeable, concerned input. It is what Thoreau, Emerson and other early environmentalists would want: true citizen input.

#### B. Some Concerns Regarding the Walden Pond Project

Walden Pond is without a doubt one of the most magical places I have ever encountered. There are those who believe that Walden is an important place of healing energy (I am one). A new posting at the top of the ramp announces Walden as an important site in the history of the environmental movement. It is all this and more.

- A. This new project is massive, and the repercussions will be significant. For one, 50 trees will be cut down, many from the hillside abutting the existing entry ramp and Route 126. Potentially serious problems include:
1. Removal of trees from the hillside will drastically increase noise from Route 126 traffic. This will significantly damage the quiet and potentially life-changing "wilderness" experience at Walden Pond.
  2. We are frequently reminded of concerns regarding erosion. Walden is covered with fences and signs warning visitors to "stay on the path" in order to protect the environment. Removal of large trees with deep roots will jeopardize the stability of this entire large hillside. What happens in a major rainstorm? I was informed that "shrubs and new trees" will be planted. Shrubs and new saplings do not compare to the strength of the deep roots of old trees.
  3. Some of the trees at Walden are more than 100 years old. Old trees bring old wisdom, connection to the past. We need to respect these residents of Walden

and not view them as "disposable". These old friends are invaluable—just ask the thousands of visitors who photograph them every year. They provide shelter, shade, beauty, and a calm, ancient energy. Any new ramp/path must save old trees. Protect them, don't cut them down!

B. A large long swath will be cut through the woods to the north of the pond, to enable the construction of a "handicap accessible pathway" to Henry Thoreau's original house site.

1. The questions about this pathway are many. Just a few: Were local handicapped/disabled citizens engaged in this process? I have friends who use wheelchairs who would not access this path. It is too long and will be exhausting, even for some in electric wheelchairs, and even with rest areas.
2. At the end of this long path, they will be met with what some consider a disappointment: a mound of stones (most from fairly recent visitors) and a cement/stone marking of Thoreau's house site. It would make more sense to search for ways to offer our disabled/handicapped visitors greater opportunity to experience Wild Walden, as Thoreau envisioned. Perhaps more access to the water, teaching tours, free accessible boating, access to quiet spots to observe our beautiful wildlife? What about a volunteer corps and a working phone number to match those requiring assistance with those available to help? Can we offer additional rugged wheelchairs designed for beach and paths? There is no doubt: vast creativity and knowledge is available in Walden's devoted public. We need this input to find the best possible options. Let's brainstorm!
3. The path plan may be based on usage in other parks with either a much larger land footprint, or situated in more urban settings. What is needed at Walden is a truly unique, creative solution, which will offer a more immersive experience of Walden as a place of "wildness", rather than a simple direct route to the house site.
4. Other concerns about this path: Walden has only a small footprint of "wilderness". This long path will cut directly through the entire northern section of Walden wilderness. How will this impact Walden wildlife, and the experience of all visitors at Walden Pond? Who will maintain this path? Will leaf and snow blowers destroy the peace and quiet of Walden Pond? On windy days, leaves may blow over the path repeatedly. Will we hire additional staff, even off-season, to keep the path clear? What will be done about the many joggers who will inevitably use this path for running?
5. Let's look at the way other small parks address this issue. At Crane's Beach, for example, disabled visitors are brought to the beach in ATVs. Let's look at workable solutions that will benefit all, including our wildlife, and keep the inherent wildness of Walden intact.

All of us, I am sure, are eager to welcome new visitors, including those needing better handicap access, to experience the magic of Walden Pond. But let's make that experience truly magical, and let's protect the wildness of Walden Pond.

C. Some concerns regarding the new bathhouse:


1. The new bathhouse will replace the old bathhouse. Will the new bathhouse be kept open year-round (the old one is not)? Even in warm months, the "old" bathhouse closes at about 5:30 pm. Visitors needing a restroom must hike to the parking lot bathroom. Will this be changed/improved with the new bathhouse?
2. Will we have funding for enough staff to maintain this new bathhouse and keep it open more regularly? Currently there is not enough staff to maintain two bathhouses during most of the year.
3. This new bathhouse will occupy more of the precious scarce footprint of Walden Pond. We do not need more buildings at Walden Pond, but rather more wilderness, and better protection of our wilderness.
4. We currently have a rather charming older bathhouse. Why not construct a new or updated bathhouse in the same location, and maintain an "1800s" look to the building. A new modern building will be another means to jar visitors back to the 21st century and out of a meaningful reverie, away from connection to nature, to wilderness. This contradicts everything Thoreau wrote about, with his emphasis on experiencing nature in its purest form.
5. The old bathhouse will not be removed, but maintained as a "look-out". What is the purpose of this look-out? Do we not wish to encourage visitors to truly experience the magic and wildness of Walden Pond? From observing many visitors over the years, the absolute star of any visit was always a chance encounter with a nesting turtle, or a cormorant stretching her wings on a rock. Surely the purpose of Walden is not to encourage more distance between visitors and our beautiful wild place, but more loving, compassionate interaction.

With a larger bathhouse in a new location, the retained footprint of the old bathhouse, a new path from Rt 126 to the pond, a large paved path cut through the northern wilderness at Walden, the removal of 50 trees, and a "landscaped" East slope abutting Rte 126, Walden is at risk of losing much of its wildness. We will see more "civilization" encroaching on this small oasis of wildness. Will visiting urban school children still feel the immediate joy of wilderness at Walden? I know I personally am already feeling great grief at the potential loss of some of our most ancient denizens, the large trees on or near the hillside at the entryway.

Is this what we want? Is this what Henry Thoreau would want? I think not. I strongly believe Mr. Thoreau would be writing daily letters and planning protests to protect the wildness of Walden Pond. At the very least, significant adjustments need to be made to the existing plan.

Please remember the words of a bumper sticker sold at the Walden Shop: "In wildness is the preservation of the world". The quote is not "In heavily managed, landscaped former wilderness..." but, "In WILDNESS". Keep Walden Wild. This is what Henry Thoreau would want. In this time of catastrophic climate change, we need more contact with WILDNESS, to help us find the strength to work to save our planet, and to remind us just why our planet, our wilderness, this beautiful magical kingdom, is worth fighting to save. Keep Walden Wild.

Sincerely,



Jan Outcalt

[janowalden@yahoo.com](mailto:janowalden@yahoo.com)