

## Background



The printed version of the *Massachusetts Coast Guide to Boston and the North Shore* contains background information on how the guide came to be, site verification methodology, public rights along the Massachusetts shoreline, public transportation tips, acknowledgements of all the people and agencies involved in the project, a detailed index with ownership of all sites listed, and more. Selected information from this printed background material is provided below.

### What Is the State's Role in Coastal Access?

The state is committed to helping people enjoy the Massachusetts coastline, with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) taking a primary role in making the coast accessible to the public. Since the late 1970s when a concerted push toward shoreline acquisition began, EEA agencies have spent millions of dollars to purchase, improve, and maintain shoreline property, and to provide grants to coastal communities to promote public access. Within EOE, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), Division of Conservation Services (DCS), and Department of Fish and Game (DFG), are all involved in coastal access improvements.

In addition to buying coastal property, the state provides coastal access in other ways. For example, by regulating coastal development under the Public Waterfront Act (Chapter 91 of the general Laws), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) secures many public access benefits along the shoreline, particularly on filled areas within developed ports and harbors. In addition, DCR has the authority to acquire public strolling rights along suitable sections of the coast.

### What Is the Coast Guide Philosophy?

The *Coast Guide* aims to make the Massachusetts coast truly approachable by offering user-friendly information to help people visit the shoreline. Although hundreds of coastal sites are open to the public, most are not normally identified on road maps or in lists of tourist attractions.

The *Coast Guide* also highlights the diversity of the coastal areas that are open to the public. The Massachusetts shoreline offers much more than large public beaches on hot summer days. This guide will show you the location of many smaller, more intimate areas that are not so well known. What's more, it will acquaint you with less familiar coastal landscapes by showing the way to rocky shores, secluded coves, tidal creeks, marshes, estuaries, and islands, some of which can be visited only by boat. Boat ramps, piers, trails, visitor centers, restrooms, and dozens of other facilities and amenities are noted to help you plan your visit.

This comprehensive guide includes many sites that do not have parking, or have restricted parking, particularly in peak season. These sites are included for people who travel by public transportation, bike, or on foot, or who live in the area or stay in a local motel or bed & breakfast. Parking restrictions are less common in the off-season.

Finally, the *Coast Guide* is designed to be simple and practical. It is small enough to fit in your glove compartment or back pack and is spiral-bound so it will lie flat on the map page you need. The detailed maps show different coastal access areas and the roads to take to find them. Although brief, the site descriptions give you a sense of what you will find at each site. Together, the information in this guide serves as an inventory and locator for the publicly owned shoreline of Massachusetts's North Shore and Greater Boston Harbor.

## What Places Are Included in the Guide?

The *Coast Guide* identifies coastal access points and properties that are owned by government agencies or land conservation organizations and are open to the public. These places range from large, spectacular parks and conservation areas to very small sites, such as public lanes and landings along Marblehead Neck and the Rockport shore. The hundreds of sites listed in the *Coast Guide* do not, however, tell the whole story of public access to the coast. Many privately owned areas also provide public access. For example, regulations implemented by DEP require that almost all projects on filled tidelands provide public access. Other privately held lands are subject to conservation restrictions that allow some degree of public access. Unfortunately, complete information on these areas is not currently available.

**Nonprofit owners include** Essex County Greenbelt Association, Massachusetts Audubon Society, The Trustees of Reservations, and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. **State agencies that own listed properties include** the Department of Conservation and Recreation; the Department of Fish and Game; the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; the Massachusetts Port Authority; and the University of Massachusetts. **Federal agencies include** the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, the General Services Administration, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Defense. All of the municipalities from Salisbury to Hingham also own coastal access sites. [Note: in the printed *Coast Guide*, you will find an 8-page index listing the owner of each site.]

## How Was the Information Collected and Checked?

The original *Coast Guide* relied on the following two primary sources of information within EOEA:

- The Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS) and its Protected Open Space and Recreation Mapping Project (see [the MassGIS website](#)).
- The DCR Division of Resource Conservation's Coastal Property Inventory, which was compiled in 1990 and includes sites owned by public agencies, private land trusts, and other nonprofit organizations dedicated to protecting conservation areas and making them accessible to the public.

To update the *Coast Guide* for republishing, CZM checked the MassGIS open space data layer and local assessor's offices for changes and additions. In addition, published documents from a variety of government and nonprofit sources were used to confirm and update the information. For example, many boat launching facilities were identified by consulting the detailed maps provided in *Public Access to the Waters of Massachusetts*, published by DFG's Public Access Board.

A great deal of time also went into checking the information in the guide. With both the MassGIS and Coastal Property Inventory projects, concerted efforts were made to minimize errors. For example, as a general rule, the information gathered for the Coastal Property Inventory was obtained directly from the organizations owning the coastal land. This information was then checked against available town records, then double-checked by municipal officials. Quality control is also a high priority for the MassGIS staff, whose open space database is extremely large and complex and is still under development. CZM staff verified information on new sites at local assessor's offices and visited every site in the *Coast Guide* starting in the summer of 2000 to ensure that the information presented was as accurate as possible and that the sites could be located using the maps in the guide.

Some sites were excluded from the final publication after they were field-checked, including areas that were fenced-off because of hazardous waste, isolated salt marsh parcels that could not be distinguished from surrounding privately owned areas, and pathways where ownership was ambiguous.

## Ownership Verification

Despite these extensive quality control efforts, individual ownership of all parcels has not been independently verified. CZM makes no representations or warranties with respect to the definitiveness of the private or public ownership data presented in the *Coast Guide*. All issues related to questions of ownership of coastal property should be investigated at the local Registry of Deeds.

Please help us continue to improve this coastal access information with each new edition of the *Coast Guide*. If you discover errors or have other useful information, please email your comments to [czm@state.ma.us](mailto:czm@state.ma.us) or mail them to:

*Coast Guide Project*  
*Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management*  
*251 Causeway Street, Suite 800*  
*Boston, MA 02114-2136*



## Coastal Focus: Areas of Special Interest

Every map has corresponding text that provides basic details about each site. For sites of statewide or regional significance, by virtue of sheer size, range of outdoor recreation opportunities, and/or ecological significance, additional information is provided. These "Coastal Focus" sites are:

- *Salisbury Beach State Reservation*
- *Parker River National Wildlife Refuge*
- *Crane Memorial Reservation and Wildlife Refuge*
- *Revere Beach Reservation*
- *Boston HarborWalk*
- *World's End*
- *Boston Harbor Islands*

On the site description pages, site names are listed alphabetically with alternate names (if any) in parentheses.

The *Coast Guide's* brief descriptions include general characteristics of the site (e.g., is it a beach, a salt marsh, or a park?), a listing of facilities that are available (e.g., are there restrooms, sports fields, hiking trails, or picnic tables?), information on fees, directions (if you can't easily find the site from the map), and information on parking availability and restrictions. As for islands, site descriptions are generally not provided unless the island can be reached by public water transportation or by foot at low tide. The guide also does not attempt to identify more specialized attributes, such as which sites are popular for diving, kayaking, wind-surfing, or dog-walking. Check out your local library or bookstores, or look on the web, for specific guides and other information for these activities.

## More on the Maps

Once you have decided on a place to visit, the *Coast Guide* will show how to get there. In addition to the maps provided, there is a map key that explains the color-coding system and symbols used.

Shown in purple on the index map, as well as on the local maps, is the "Coastline Drive." This continuous artery, made up of major routes that are parallel to the shoreline, is the "jumping off point" into the local street system on each map page.

Selected street names provided on the individual map pages will help you navigate to the sites. The *Coast Guide* does not provide "door-to-door" directions in every case, but should always bring you into the immediate vicinity of your destination. Specific directions are given on the site description page for particularly hard-to-find locations.

It may be difficult to locate the exact position of some of the smallest sites, especially if they are somewhat overgrown or otherwise in a deteriorated condition. In such cases, be particularly sensitive to the privacy of nearby landowners. You may also want to contact the local town hall in advance to obtain more specific information on whether the site is in usable condition and how to recognize it.

