

M | MASSACHUSETTS CONSERVATION VOTERS

June 14, 2019

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chairman, Senate Ways & Means
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chairman, House Ways & Means
State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairmen Rodrigues and Michlewitz,

As you deliberate on the final budget to present to your colleagues for approval, we call your attention to Line 2810-0100 (Parks and Recreation Operations) in the proposed FY 2020 budget for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

As you know, DCR has suffered devastating cuts over the past decade in both operating revenue and staff going back to the 2008 recession, from which the agency is still recovering. We would respectfully ask that the conference committee support the House's proposed funding level for this account, \$45.7 million, in the final budget. Even with this sizeable increase over the current fiscal year's \$40.2 million, this account will still be funded approximately \$700,000 less than it was back in FY 2016, even without taking any inflation into account.

With recent funding restorations, DCR has been making great strides at improving our public open spaces, which are an integral component of our state's \$16 billion annual outdoor recreation economy.

You both well know the positive impact DCR has on our citizens from the array of activities along the Esplanade in Boston to the Harbor Islands to the heavily used Horseneck Beach Reservation in Westport. MCV and the rest of the environmental community initially supported a \$6 million increase in the 2810-0100 account, but the \$5M increase provided in the House budget will help tremendously.

With the additional budget, DCR could continue to replace some of the lost staffing that has plagued the agency, particularly by increasing the innovative Park Support Crew from 15 to 25 people. This crew reduces reliance on more costly outside contractors to conduct small infrastructure maintenance and repair projects around the state. They could also increase the Department's professional engineering staff to cope with the larger infrastructure inspections

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and capital improvements that DCR faces; and convert some of its best, longest-tenured seasonal staff to FTE's to stem attrition and help adequately staff facilities year-round.

We hope you will report the House number for this critical line item.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Doug Pizzi

Executive Director

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Cc: Sen. Cindy Friedman, Sen. Vinny deMacedo, Rep. Denise Garlick, Rep. Todd Smola