



CHARLES RIVER

conservancy

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October 29, 2014

Office of Public Outreach  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02114  
**Attn: Charles River RMP**

To whom it may concern:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Charles River Esplanade – New Basin Complex Resource Management Plan (RMP). The plan aligns with some of our goals and involves a new and critical part of the Charles River parklands. The plan also aligns with the vision of our partner organization, The Esplanade Association (TEA) and its *Esplanade 2020* vision.

As you might be aware, the mission of the Charles River Conservancy, which will celebrate its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, is to provide stewardship and enhancements for the urban parklands from the Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam., and to make the parklands more active, attractive, and accessible to all. With over 25,000 supporters and volunteers, we represent many individuals and groups on both sides of the river.

The Resource Management plan has the potential to revitalize some of the oldest and newest Charles River parklands, including North Point Park, Nashua Street Park, and Paul Revere Park. Many of the RMP's proposals for the Esplanade also align with the goals of TEA's *Esplanade 2020* vision.

However, to ensure that the RMP fulfills its potential to bring out the best in the parklands, the Conservancy would like to submit these comments:

1. We are excited about the Memorial Drive Phase II project and the necessary improvements it will bring to the Cambridge Esplanade. We remind DCR that funding for the project has been included in the Environmental Bond Bill that passed earlier this year.

Furthermore, we believe that the second part of this project, regarding stormwater management improvements, should be split from this initiative and made into a separate development.

2. Since the Community Development Department of the City of Cambridge has produced a Cambridge Riverfront Plan, we ask DCR to coordinate their efforts and draw on the plans and resources of Cambridge as well.
3. We support the creation of an accessible pedestrian and bicycle link between the Boston University Bridge and the Boston Esplanade. We note that the project would incorporate the Grand Junction railroad bridge. We hope that the upcoming I-90 realignment project will result in the creation of a community path and DMU train service between Allston and Kendall Square on the railroad bridge as mitigation for the construction.
4. The Conservancy wants the description of the proposed renovation of the Lee Pool for swimming “adjacent” to the river to include swimming *in* the river. The proposed renovation is part of a larger omission of river swimming from the RMP.

We remind DCR that the Charles River is safe for swimming some 75% of the year, and that public swimming in the river is an increasingly viable pursuit. The Conservancy has advocated for river swimming as part of our mission, helped organize swim races since 2005, held community swims in the river in 2013 and 2014, and hopes to establish more community swims and a permanent location for swimming in the future. These goals should be reflected in the RMP, and can be accomplished through working together with the Conservancy.

5. The RMP should also explicitly mention improving the parklands’ landscape through rainwater storage and irrigation. We strongly suggest that resources are put towards rain barrels and other means of rainwater storage to make water accessible for irrigation and other horticultural purposes on an already dry landscape.
6. We strongly support the separation of the Dr. Paul Dudley White Bike Path from slower walking paths along the Boston Esplanade, which will benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. However, we were surprised to see that improving biking along the Charles through path separation was not in DCR’s stated goals for the RMP.
7. The Conservancy (along with TEA) has significant concerns about the safety of cyclists and pedestrians along the Boston Esplanade. We feel that adding directional, regulatory, and informational signage should be a **high-priority** project that will significantly increase safety for all travelling through this portion of the parklands.

8. We are discouraged that the restoration of Commissioner's Landing lacks immediate funding despite being a high priority project. It is a black eye in an area of the parklands that is otherwise undergoing wonderful restoration.
9. The replacement of the Charles River Bistro should also be a part of this RMP.
10. While we appreciate any efforts taken to keep Canada geese off of the parklands, we encourage DCR to examine new and even experimental means to do so. We feel the current plans, which would block the river from view, are insufficient.
11. We are excited about the expanded connections offered by the construction of a 12' wide pedestrian bridge across the Old Lock channel. We would like to remind DCR of a precedent set by a private donor paying for the nighttime illumination of the Harvard Bridge. A similar partnership could work here.
12. We support the creation of a critical link between the Cambridge Esplanade and the proposed Charles River exhibit at the Museum of Science. However, we see no mention of DCR working with the Museum of Science towards maintaining an upstream connection along the river. We ask that DCR ensures that the museum exhibit does not reduce or eliminate public access to the upstream side of the museum and the connecting paths, per DCR's lease arrangement with the museum. The parklands are public, yet they are often used as if they were owned by the Museum of Science.
13. We are surprised that the creation of new parkland from the relocation of Storrow Drive is only a medium priority recommendation in this RMP. The construction of Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary's new garage provides a very rare opportunity to move the parkway and expand the parklands. It is very important that DCR retains the upmost vigilance in this process- we feel that anything less would be inappropriate, given the opportunity.
14. We strongly approve the retaining of a horticulturalist for the restoration of North Point Park, Nashua Street Park, and Paul Revere Park. The Conservancy would like to discuss taking on maintenance of these parks through our Conservancy Volunteers program.
15. The RMP contains no mention of the Lynch Family Skatepark, which will be owned and maintained by DCR, constructed by the Conservancy, and opened in 2015. The Skatepark will be an incredible draw for the New Basin parklands, and it should be included within the RMP.
16. We applaud DCR for producing interpretive signs for the Boston Esplanade's Centennial. As part of this RMP, we ask that DCR considers producing a permanent set of signs for the parklands and making their information available on the website of DCR, TEA, and the Conservancy.

17. Finally, we request that the Stewardship Council meeting for discussion of the RMP take place within the City of Boston.

We see this plan, correctly implemented, as a win-win opportunity for DCR, TEA, the Conservancy, the parklands, and the community. We look forward to continuing our partnership with DCR to improve the parklands for public health, recreation, our environment, and the quality of life of area residents. Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Sincerely,

*Renata von Tscharner*

Renata von Tscharner  
Founder and President  
Charles River Conservancy

cc:

Senator William N. Brownsberger  
Senator Sal N. DiDomenico  
Senator Anthony W. Petrucci

Representative Jay Livingstone  
Representative Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.

Stuart Dash, City of Cambridge

Tani Marinovich, The Esplanade Association  
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John Shields, The Esplanade Association