

By Hand

Governor Charlie Baker
State House
Boston, MA

July 9, 2015

Re: DCR, DEP Early Retirements

Dear Governor Baker:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) have seen deep budget cuts in recent years. These cuts have resulted in significant staff reductions, which negatively impact the people and businesses of Massachusetts. Now, with long-time employees participating in the retirement incentive program, the agencies are suffering from substantial loss of institutional knowledge and expertise. More than 30 organizations undersigned from across the Commonwealth request a heightened staffing refill level for these agencies.

As of 2008, DCR had approximately 1,280 FTEs. As of 2015, that was down to approximately 960 (a 25% reduction). Now, through the early retirement incentive program, the agency is losing approximately 120 FTE's (a 13% reduction). This leaves DCR with about 840 employees, or 35% fewer employees.

As of 2009, DEP had approximately 925 FTEs. As of 2015, that was down to about 750 employees (a 20% reduction). Now, through the early retirement incentive program, the agency is losing approximately 110 FTE's (a 14% reduction). This leaves DEP with about 640 employees, or 30% fewer employees.

Staff losses include:

- Veteran lawyers who understand DEP regulations and programs
- DCR employees experienced in operating parks and facilities despite great reductions in funding and staff
- Staff with experience providing technical assistance to municipalities and businesses
- Staff with deep relationships in their assigned communities and regions
- Staff with extensive expertise in river protection and restoration, toxic chemical use reduction, natural resource planning and management, and recycling.

Even with new hires beyond the proposed 20% refill, these agencies will not function properly. Beyond the numbers, we have lost significant expertise and institutional memory which cannot be easily replaced. One hundred twenty-five experienced employees cannot be replaced with 25 new hires.

In addition, at the same time as DEP's staffing capacity has been greatly reduced, responsibilities have increased. In 2008 the Commonwealth passed the landmark Global Warming Solutions Act and the Green Communities Act, charging DEP with meeting the critical economy-wide challenge of climate change. This is in addition to existing responsibilities for brownfield recovery and the clean-up of contaminated sites, responding to hazardous waste spills, protecting drinking water, supporting municipal conservation commission on wetlands decisions, protecting and stewarding significant natural resources, and permitting for new development. We put our economic and environmental future at risk if we can't get this right.

In terms of DCR, current maintenance of parks and pools is so limited we are seeing the privatization of state owned parks and recreation areas, reduced operating hours, and even compromised public safety. Our state parks and recreation sites are invaluable resources for all of the Commonwealth's residents, offering close-to-home recreational opportunities. These resources are particularly important for working class families who cannot afford more distant vacations.

We cannot do more with less. We urge you to re-staff DCR and DEP beyond the planned 20% replacement rate to ensure there is sufficient staffing to carry out the agencies' mandates.

Respectfully,

George Bachrach, President
Environmental League of Mass

Joe Dorant, President
Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers and
Scientists (MOSES)

Veronica Eady, Director
CLF Massachusetts

Cathy Ann Buckley, Chair
Massachusetts Sierra Club

Jennifer Ryan, Director of Policy
The Trustees of Reservations

Elizabeth Saunders, Massachusetts Director
Clean Water Action

Bill Ravanese, Sr. Director, Health Care Green Building
& Energy Program
Health Care Without Harm

Mary Griffin, Executive Director
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Julia Blatt, Executive Director
Mass Rivers Alliance

Barbara Jacobson, Program Director
Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition

Eugene Benson, Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions

Ryan J. Aylesworth, Founder & CEO
Western Massachusetts Public Lands Alliance

Robert L. Zimmerman Jr., Executive Director
Charles River Watershed Association

EkOngKar Singh Khalsa, Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association

Alison Field-Juma, Executive Director
OARS

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Executive Director
Nashua River Watershed Association

Ian Cooke, Executive Director
Neponset River Watershed Association

Ellen Arnold, Facilitator
Massachusetts Forest and Park Friends Network

Julie Crockford, President
Emerald Necklace Conservancy

Christine Poff, Executive Director
Franklin Park Coalition

Judy Lehrer Jacobs, Executive Director
Friends of the Blue Hills

Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director
Sudbury Valley Trustees

Neil Anderson, Executive Director
Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation

Marcia Cooper, President
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Ellen Mass, President
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Bill Vickstrom, President
Friends of the Myles Standish State Forest

Arlene Mattison, President
Brookline GreenSpace Alliance

Sarah Freeman, Representative
Arborway Coalition

Bill Taylor, President
Friends of Upton State Forest

Ken Kipen, Director
Hilltown Anti-Herbicide Coalition

Sharl Heller, President
Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance

CC: A&F Secretary Lepore
EEA Secretary Beaton
Massachusetts Legislature