

STATE GRANTS BOOST BEACH PROGRAMS IN POST-PANDEMIC SUMMER



THE BEACH AT CARSON BEACH PACKED WITH PEOPLE ON THE AS TEMPERATURES REACHED AROUND 90 DEGREES, SUNDAY MAY 23, 2021, IN SOUTH BOSTON. (HERALD PHOTO BY JIM MICHAUD/ BOSTON HERALD)

Free concerts and movie nights, yoga and fitness classes, circus performances and wheelchairs to help those with disabilities access beaches are all getting a boost as part of a \$300,000 grant program that Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and the Department of Conservation and Recreation announced Saturday.

The Better Beach Program grants are heading to 67 organizations to support 150 free beach events and programs this year in nine communities from Nahant to Nantasket, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay said. This year's grants represent a \$100,000 increase compared to 2020 when the nonprofit group dolled out about \$200,000 to 22 organizations.

"It is exciting to have so many new organizations on board this year," Maya Smith, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's community engagement manager, said in a statement. "I am certain that they will bring new visions, new voices, more food choices, more accessibility, and a more diverse audience to the beach."

The funds stem from a DCR appropriation and also include \$50,000 in proceeds from the Virtual Harpoon Shamrock Splash, "which will be awarded to organizations and creatives who empower, amplify and invest in community members of color and improve beach access for people with disabilities," the group said.

Communities with organizations receiving grant money include Lynn, Nahant, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester and Quincy, among others. South Boston Neighborhood House, for example, is set to receive \$10,000 to hold "family fun nights."

Quincy's Department of Natural Resources will receive \$10,000 to host youth beach programs on Wollaston Beach in partnership with Friends of Wollaston Beach.

In Dorchester, the organization HipStory will use \$5,000 for DJ sets, live music and MC's. And Save the Harbor is also allocating \$7,500 to purchase mobility mats and beach wheelchairs to increase accessibility for people with disabilities at metropolitan-area beaches.

"Save the Harbor is committed to increased equity and improved access in all our programs and on our beaches," Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's Executive Director Chris Mancini said.

"It is going to be a great summer, with terrific free events and programs that celebrate our diversity and resilience," said Bruce Berman, director of strategy and communications at Save the Harbor. "After a very difficult year like no other, we are looking forward to seeing you all face-to-face on the beach."