

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely San Francisco, showing a large body of water (the San Francisco Bay) and a prominent bay (San Francisco Bay). The city's grid pattern is visible on the land, and the water is a deep blue-green color. The title 'Beaches' is overlaid in a large, yellow, serif font.

# *Beaches*

**We Can Be Proud Of**

REPORT OF THE METROPOLITAN BEACHES COMMISSION

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<b>Rosanne Foley</b> <i>DotWell</i>
<b>Paul Grogan</b> <i>The Boston Foundation</i>
<b>Douglas Gutro</b> <i>Quincy City Council President</i>
<b>Carol Haney</b> <i>Revere Beach Partnership</i>
<b>Senator Robert Hedlund</b> <i>Plymouth &amp; Norfolk</i>
<b>Representative Bradford Hill</b> <i>Fourth Essex</i>
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<b>Anthony Lozzi</b> <i>City of Lynn</i>
<b>Senator Thomas McGee</b> <i>Third Essex &amp; Middlesex</i>
<b>Joan Meschino</b> <i>Hull Board of Selectmen</i>
<b>Secretary Daniel O'Connell</b> <i>Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development</i>
<b>Joseph Orfant</b> <i>Department of Conservation and Recreation</i>
<b>Representative Kathi-Anne Reinstein</b> <i>Sixteenth Suffolk</i>
<b>Richard White</b> <i>Winthrop Town Manager</i>

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## Letter from the Chairs

Dear Friends:

Like many of you, the two of us grew up on these beaches. Looking back, some of our fondest memories are of the times we spent each summer with our families and friends at Carson Beach in South Boston and Constitution Beach in East Boston. For us, like so many families across the region, the public beaches from Nantasket to Nahant were our “Cape Cod.”

We spent our summer days from sunup to sundown on these beaches. We learned to swim in the ocean, and to sail at the youth sailing centers nearby. We grew to appreciate the quality time we were able to spend with our families at the beach, and the value of teamwork and community on the nearby ballfields and skating rinks. These public assets were at the center of our communities, an important part of all our lives.

It is clear that over the past decades, despite the important investments we have made in clean water and in new facilities like new bathhouses and pavilions, these beaches have not been meeting the public’s expectations. Inadequate maintenance, lack of basic facilities on some beaches, and limited activities and events are keeping the public away and diminishing the experience of many beachgoers.

That is why the Legislature established the Metropolitan Beaches Commission—to examine the state of the region’s public beaches and to make specific recommendations about how to improve them over the short and long terms. This report represents our best effort to do just that, and we want to thank the Commissioners, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and the consultants and staff, and each of you who participated for your time and hard work.

We recognize the tremendous value of these beaches as a recreational asset for our region’s residents. We understand their potential to improve the quality of life we enjoy in the region and increase our competitiveness as we work to attract new talent to the region and retain it.

To be successful, the Commonwealth has to find the resources to do a better job maintaining these beaches, but it is clear that more resources alone will not solve the problem. To see real improvements will require real reforms: Better management and increased accountability at the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR); stronger partnerships among DCR, local beachfront communities, and local “Friends” groups; new programs and activities on the beaches; and continued public participation in the new Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board.

It will take time to address the challenges these beaches face. We are convinced, however, that if we continue to work together we can make sure that 20 years from now we won’t need another beaches commission, and instead will again have beaches we can all be proud to use and share.

Sincerely,

SENATOR JACK HART, CO-CHAIRMAN

REPRESENTATIVE ANTHONY PETRUCELLI, CO-CHAIRMAN



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## MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE METROPOLITAN BEACHES PROCESS

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**Thank you!**

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# 1. The Challenge

The transformation of Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay over the last 20 years is one of the nation’s great environmental and economic success stories. Today, we are well on our way to enjoying some of the cleanest water in the nation, unlocking the potential of the waterfront to enhance our quality of life and strengthen our region’s economic competitiveness.

At the same time, our region’s public beaches have not kept pace with improvements along the waterfront as a whole. Despite important capital investments in several communities, the beaches remain a work in progress, leaving residents and beachgoers alike unable to fully enjoy the environment we have worked so hard to restore.

This regional network of 15 miles of sandy public swimming beaches is a remarkable—and largely untapped—resource. Our beaches have the power to link the more than one million people who live within a half hour of the water’s edge to a resurgent harbor and bay, the result of our \$4.5 billion investment in water quality.

The economic value of these beaches is much more than the simple sum of beachfront hot dog sales, seasonal job creation, or the opportunity to attract new visitors or extend hotel stays, though they are all important. Taken together, the beaches are extraordinary recreational assets that can enrich the lives of our communities, strengthen our economic competitiveness as other regions invest heavily in recreational amenities, and help us to retain and attract the highly mobile young workers who are essential to our economic future.



The challenge today is to translate potential into reality—to create beaches we can be proud of. The success of this effort will depend on a renewed partnership among the state, beachfront communities, local partnerships, and active and committed citizens. Working together we can capture the potential of these important Boston-area assets, and continue to improve the quality of life we enjoy in our capital city and across the region.

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## 2. The Commission's Work

### Overview

In 2006 the Massachusetts Legislature established the Metropolitan Beaches Commission to take an in-depth look at the public beaches owned by the Commonwealth and managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and to make recommendations to bring them to their fullest potential. The Commission is made up of elected officials and community, civic, nonprofit, and business leaders from across the region.



The Commission asked the nonprofit environmental advocacy organization Save the Harbor/Save the Bay—with the financial support of the Boston Foundation—to serve as the lead project consultant and manage the Commission's inquiry, and retained the planning and urban design firm of Goody Clancy, budget and management consultants Raphael and Raphael, and communications consultants The Strategy Group to help conduct the hearings and prepare this report.



Beginning in June 2006, the Commission held public hearings in each beachfront community and heard from hundreds of residents and beachgoers. The Commission heard from residents of seaside towns like Nahant, Winthrop and Hull, from older cities like Lynn, Quincy and Revere, and from the Boston neighborhoods of East Boston, South Boston, and Dorchester. The Commission learned firsthand that the public loves these beaches, and that the success of the beaches is critical to the health and vitality of our beachfront communities and our region as a whole.

*The Commission visited each beach and held hearings in each beachfront community.*

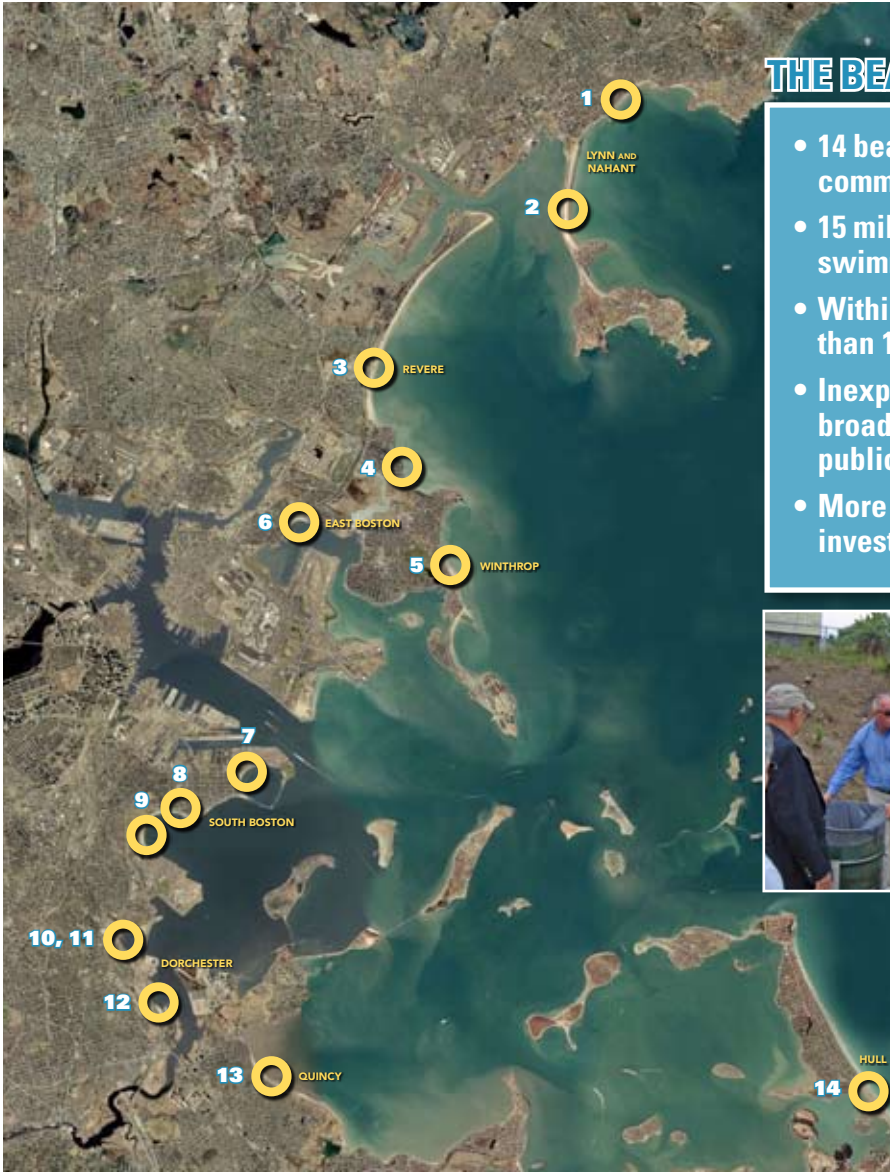
Over the course of the hearings the Commission came to understand—and to share—the public's passion for these remarkable assets. At the same time, the Commission clearly

heard the public's frustration with the present state of the beaches: very poor maintenance and limited recreational or educational programming are a concern on most beaches, while some beaches continue to lack basic amenities.

At hearing after hearing, the Commission heard that the public is willing to get involved to help solve the problems we face on the beaches by creating “friends” groups, holding beach clean-ups, and planning new events, programs and activities to draw people back to the beaches. But the Commission also learned that the Commonwealth must do more to fulfill its stewardship role in conserving and enhancing these public amenities.

Though local concerns differed from place to place, all those who took part shared the same love of the beaches and the same goal of assuring that we have beaches we can be proud to use and share.





**THE BEACHES: Key Facts**

- 14 beaches in 9 communities
- 15 miles of free public swimming beaches
- Within ½ hour of more than 1,000,000 residents
- Inexpensive parking and broad accessibility by public transportation
- More than \$4.5 billion invested in clean water



1. King’s Beach, Lynn
2. Nahant Beach, Nahant
3. Revere Beach, Revere
4. Short Beach, Revere
5. Winthrop Beach, Winthrop
6. Constitution Beach, East Boston
7. Pleasure Bay and Castle Island, South Boston

8. L and M Street beaches, South Boston
9. Carson Beach, South Boston
- 10,11. Malibu/Savin Hill beaches, Dorchester
12. Tenean Beach, Dorchester
13. Wollaston Beach, Quincy
14. Nantasket Beach, Hull

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**The Process: What the Commission learned—from the public, agency officials and employees, community-based organizations, local partnerships and elected officials. (A summary of all testimony is available online at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org).)**

The Commission’s work, beginning in June 2006, has involved several distinct efforts that together have provided a comprehensive assessment of conditions on the metropolitan beaches. The Commission’s process has included the following elements.

**COMMISSION MEETINGS**

The Commission held regular meetings to discuss key issues and concerns, review public hearing comments, and consider the technical analyses prepared by its consultants.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS IN BEACHFRONT COMMUNITIES**

The Commission held eight public hearings in the beach communities in the summer and early fall of 2006. The Commission publicized these meetings through ads in local newspapers and flyers, and directly invited more than 1,500 people to attend. Each meeting was well attended, with typical attendance ranging from 25–50 people. The hearings were extensively covered in local media. The hearing process included formal testimony from elected officials, community organizations, public safety officials, and members of the public. The hearings also engaged all attendees in an interactive discussion of what is working and what is not working at each beach. Attendees documented their concerns on “post-it notes,” allowing the Commission to capture very specific comments from several hundred attendees. The Appendices to this report include a transcription of these comments. Pages 11–18. of this report document highlights and common themes expressed by meeting attendees.



**PUBLIC HEARING WITH AGENCY OFFICIALS AND LABOR REPRESENTATIVES**

In early October 2006 the Commission held a hearing at the State House and heard from the Secretary of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), representatives of the state’s Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents some DCR workers.

Though the newly appointed secretary was not prepared to discuss the DCR’s beach budget in detail, he did outline a number of new systems and management initiatives already under way. He also confirmed that the number of full-time workers at DCR had decreased since 2001, and that as a result, the department was still unable to meet its own maintenance and performance standards on these beaches and elsewhere.

AFSCME representatives expressed the workers’ ongoing frustration with staffing levels and reiterated the strong feeling that it was unfair to constantly ask DCR employees to do more with less.

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## YOUTH FOCUS GROUP

The Commission made a concerted effort to hear from young people and the organizations and institutions that serve them about how to better help them connect with and enjoy our beaches, harbor, islands and bays. The Commission hosted a youth focus group at the State House on November 28, 2006. Each invited organization was asked to bring a staff member

and a youth participant. Over 25 young users and youth service providers attended, and the Commission heard from all attendees about how they use the beaches, islands, and waterfront, the challenges and obstacles that exist for youth using these resources, and their thoughts on ways to make the resources work better for them.

Participants represented three types of user groups: water-based youth programs like swimming and sailing programs; inland youth organizations that visit or use the harbor islands and beaches from time to time; and institutions and organizations that serve young people around the harbor.

All participants expressed a desire to see more programs and activities—including environmental educational programs, swimming and sailing lessons, concerts, contests and festivals—to bring young people off the streets and back to the beach.

## HARBOR ISLANDS AND WATER TRANSPORTATION FOCUS GROUP

The legislation that established the Commission specifically called for an examination of the beaches of the Boston Harbor Islands National Park and Recreation Area. One of the biggest

### PROCESS SUMMARY

Additional documentation is available online at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org).

**COMMISSION MEETINGS** to discuss issues, evaluate information and shape recommendations

### PUBLIC HEARINGS IN EACH BEACHFRONT COMMUNITY AND VISITS TO EACH BEACH:

- Revere Public Hearing, June 28, 2006
- East Boston Public Hearing, July 18, 2006
- Lynn & Nahant Public Hearing, August 2, 2006
- Winthrop Public Hearing, August 7, 2006
- South Boston Public Hearing, August 9, 2006
- Dorchester Public Hearing, August 10, 2006
- Hull Public Hearing, August 17, 2006
- Quincy Public Hearing, September 14, 2006

**PUBLIC HEARING WITH AGENCY OFFICIALS AND LABOR REPRESENTATIVES** (Executive Office of Environmental Affairs/Division of Capital Asset Management/American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees), October 3, 2006

**YOUTH FOCUS GROUP**, November 28, 2006

**HARBOR ISLANDS BEACHES/WATER TRANSPORTATION FOCUS GROUP**, November 29, 2006

### MEETINGS WITH STATE OFFICIALS TO REVIEW DCR BUDGET AND OPERATIONS

- Executive Office for Administration and Finance, November 1, 2006
- DCR Finance, November 9 and 29, and December 7, 2006
- Representatives of DCR Urban Parks, November 9 and December 8, 2006
- Comptroller, November 16, 2006

**PUBLIC HEARING TO REVIEW THE COMMISSION'S PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** at UMass, Boston, January 20, 2007

**MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY**, January 31, 2007



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challenges facing the island beaches is the cost and availability of water transportation. At the Commission's public hearings many people expressed a desire to explore water transportation options to improve access to the beaches and beachfront communities, particularly those that have had boat service in the past.

Because water transportation and the success of the island park's beaches are so closely tied, one focus group was held on both the island beaches and water transportation. Over 25 people attended the meeting on November 29, 2006, including representatives of organizations and institutions that manage and facilitate use of the harbor island beaches. Participants were asked to tell the Commission what is working well and what is not, and how best to meet the challenges facing both water transportation users and managers. They offered specific suggestions about how to improve the island beach experience for visitors—including the introduction of showers and changing rooms at Spectacle Island.



The consensus of those who participated was that affordable water transportation from gateways around the region was critical to the success of the Harbor Islands, and they proposed a number of ways to address the challenge. A summary of the hearing and testimony is available on line at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org).

### **PUBLIC HEARING AT UMASS BOSTON**

In January 2007, the Commission invited all participants in the process—more than 1,500 individuals—to a hearing at UMass Boston to review the Commission's analyses, preliminary findings and recommendations. Following a presentation of its findings, the Commission asked the participants, "Did we get it right?" Meeting participants strongly endorsed the recommendations and identified some areas for further study or refinement. These public comments are reflected in the Findings and Recommendations described in this document.



*Commission public hearings were well attended in each community, reflecting strong public interest in the beaches—and concern about current conditions.*



# LYNN AND NAHANT PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY



## King's Beach and Nahant Beach

*"The beaches are a necessity, not a luxury, for residents, and additional resources are needed in order to maintain them."*

– Senator and Commissioner Thomas McGee

*"The Lynn and Nahant beaches are an absolute jewel, but the biggest problem is that they are very unpolished at the moment."*

– Mike Manning, Nahant Selectman

*"It's important to remember that when so much money is spent on the beach that there is a commitment that needs to be made to maintain those improvements, otherwise they will fall apart and waste the taxpayers' money."*

– Robert Tucker, President, Friends of Lynn and Nahant Beaches

## PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS

The Commission hosted a public hearing in Lynn, for residents of both Lynn and Nahant, on August 2, 2006. Over 40 people attended, and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, small business owners, and residents

## WHAT'S WORKING WELL

- Great swimmable beach
- Good landscaping at Red Rock
- Great resource for migrating birds...dune habitat
- Summer concerts series is excellent...friends group
- Excellent police patrols

## WHAT'S NOT WORKING

- Ward Bathhouse in very poor condition—bathrooms don't work; water fountain is broken
- Causeway in very poor condition, raising safety concerns
- Poor maintenance; need more frequent trash pickup
- Need better enforcement of littering and dog rules
- Sand is infrequently cleaned
- Smell of algae can be unbearable

## BEACH INFORMATION

### NAHANT BEACH

**Miles:** 2 miles

**Bathhouse:** yes (Ward Bathhouse is in poor condition, Halfway House was demolished in 2000 and is scheduled to reopen in July 2007)

**Bathrooms:** yes (some bathhouse toilets work)

**Water:** no (fountains don't work)

**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (variety of eat-in and take-out)

**Shade:** no

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (#439 bus)

### KING'S BEACH

**Miles:** 0.8 miles

**Bathhouse:** no

**Bathrooms:** no

**Water:** no

**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (vendor at Lynn/Swampscott line)

**Shade:** no

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (#439 bus)

# REVERE PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY

## Revere Beach and Short Beach

*“We held a charette years ago and formed the Revere Beach Partnership. Since then we’ve met a lot of our initial goals...we take major ownership of our beach and think it’s great.”*

— Representative and Commissioner Kathi-Anne Reinstein



*“Revere Beach should be able to serve as a model...the city has used productive partnerships with DCR and the Revere Police to make significant improvements in maintenance and public safety.”* — Revere Mayor Thomas Ambrosino

*“Working together, we’ve done a lot for the beach. The Revere Beach Partnership’s main goal is to attract people to the beach—the sandcastle event, this winter we had a passion plunge, we have concerts, and we will now have a farmer’s market—all under the auspices of the partnership.”* — Commissioner Carol Haney

*“We want our beach, we want it clean, and we want all the laws enforced. We’re not asking for too much—we just want to have our beach be as pretty as it should be.”* — Linda Rosa (Office of Senate President Robert Travaglini)

*“Back in the day there were always crowds of people on the beach, that’s what Revere beach is.”* —Sheryl Queen, Owner, Twist and Shake



### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in Revere on June 28, 2006. Over 40 people attended, and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, small business owners, and residents.

### WHAT’S WORKING WELL:

- Great efforts to beautify beach—hanging baskets of plants and flowers
- Easy access to the beach by public transportation and by car
- Effective partnerships between local non-profits, DCR, and friends group
- Successful programming—children’s kayaking, sand castle festival, winter “passion plunge”
- People love to get together at Revere Beach

### WHAT’S NOT WORKING:

- Dirty sand—full of cigarette butts, dirty diapers, and needles
- Poor maintenance—need more trash barrels and clean gazebo
- Need more police presence on beach to keep away gangs and vagrants, keep noise levels down
- Dangerous traffic—need speed control on boulevard and safer pedestrian access
- Poor water quality when nearby sewage treatment plant fails

### BEACH INFORMATION

#### REVERE BEACH

- Miles:** 3
- Bathroom:** no
- Bathrooms:** yes
- Water:** varies (some fountains don’t work)
- Snack Bar/Food:** yes (variety of take-out and eat-in)
- Shade:** yes
- Parking:** yes (street parking and parking lots)
- Public Transportation:** yes (Revere Beach and Wonderland T stops)

#### SHORT BEACH

- Miles:** 100 yards
- Bathroom:** no
- Bathrooms:** no
- Water:** no
- Snack Bar/Food:** no
- Shade:** no
- Parking:** no
- Public Transportation:** yes (Beachmont T stop)

# WINTHROP PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY



## Winthrop Beach

*“I remember years ago how we testified about the need for our waters to be clean... people couldn’t go to the beach because of the poor water quality. Well, we’ve addressed that issue....Now, I think it’s time for us to address the quality of the beaches that water is on. We have a problem now because of the poor condition of the beaches, not poor water quality.”* – **Representative Robert DeLeo**

*“We have the money. We have the knowledge. It’s time to stop talking and get some action. We’ve been waiting for our sand while improvements happen at all the other beaches—I want to see sand here this year. It’s deplorable.”*

– **Irvin Goldstein, Winthrop resident**

*“I think what we’ve done over the years... is let the beaches deteriorate because of the water quality. There was no need to spend money on those things... I think that the kinds of issues we have and the kinds of problems we have are similar to other beach communities.”* – **Winthrop Town Councilor Thomas Reilly**

*“The area between the breakers and the beach is deteriorating. We’re always getting complaints from constituents about the filth, trash, and lack of trash barrels. Winthrop Beach has truly been forgotten.”* – **Winthrop Town Councilor Joe Ferrino**

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

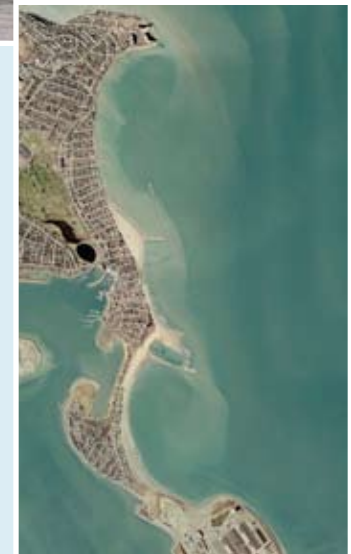
The Commission hosted a public hearing in Winthrop on August 7, 2006. Over 30 people attended, and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, and residents.

### WHAT’S WORKING WELL:

- Beach is easily accessible to neighborhood and residents
- Water is clean
- Great place to experience nature—sunrises, sunsets, and waves
- Brings community together as a neighborhood meeting place

### WHAT’S NOT WORKING:

- Sand has eroded—the beach is a public safety hazard
- Poor maintenance, need better snow removal and sidewalk repair
- Lack of facilities including shade, water, and seating
- Lack of programming and activities
- Poor access for people with disabilities
- Need better enforcement for dogs and dog waste



### BEACH INFORMATION

**Miles:** 1.5 miles

**Bathhouse:** no

**Bathrooms:** yes (seasonal in old MDC ranger station)

**Water:** no

**Snack Bar/Food:** no (eat-in restaurant across street)

**Shade:** no

**Parking:** limited on street

**Public Transportation:** yes (#712 bus)

# EAST BOSTON PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY

## Constitution Beach

*"I spent many many years at Orient Heights beach, and it's very important to me. We all...spent our summers there, and swam out here. We do have some concerns, like Logan Airport and other issues....On the other hand, I'm really excited about improvements like the new bathhouse."*

– Boston City Councilor and Commissioner Salvatore LaMattina



*"Simple things aren't getting done, like trash pickup, grass mowing, and graffiti being left for months. The gazebo goes unnoticed until it gets to a point where it's really an eyesore and then they'll fix it, and the cycle repeats."*

– Eddie Deveau, Constitution Beach Association

*"The conditions under the gazebo are very undesirable—benches are off, graffiti on the floor...it's gross....By having the kids invested in our program, we went all summer without graffiti on our trailer, which is a testament to getting kids involved and the success of our program."*

– Wendy Zinn, Constitution Beach Association

*"The Commission's inquiry is driven by the response to problems on the beaches. We all see that, and we're getting similar responses from the public as we go out to different cities and towns.....The Constitution Beach Association is a good thing, but we want to get it doing even more to make our beach great."*

– Representative and Commission Co-Chair Anthony Petrucci



### BEACH INFORMATION

**Miles:** 0.5 miles

**Bathhouse:** yes

**Bathrooms:** yes

**Water:** no (water fountain turned off)

**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (no snack bar, but eat-in and take-out restaurants across the street)

**Shade:** yes (gazebo and benches)

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (Orient Heights T stop)

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in East Boston on July 18, 2006. Over 25 people attended, and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, and residents.

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

- Family friendly beach and neighborhood gathering place
- New bathhouse is appreciated by residents
- Water is cleaner than it used to be
- Nearby facilities and recreation, including the sailing center, skating rink, and swimming

### WHAT'S NOT WORKING:

- Public safety is a major concern
- Maintenance is poor—large unrepaired sinkhole, electricity is out in gazebo, new water fountains already not working
- Logan Airport creates unbearable noise and pollution
- Trash and dog waste litter the beach
- Need more activities to bring people to the beach and a place to store equipment



# SOUTH BOSTON PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY



## Carson Beach, L and M Street Beaches, Pleasure Bay and Castle Island

*“This beach is a precious jewel, but some of the conditions on this beach have become a disgrace over the years.”* – Francis Collins, South Boston resident

*“I think we need a remedial crash course in civics as our citizens are making a lot of trash.”* – Jim Donovan, Friends of South Boston Harbor

*“How do we get people back to the beach? A couple of years ago my daughter asked ‘can we go to the lake?’ because she’s spent so little time here. We need kayaks, swimming lessons, sand castles... and people here to use them.”* – Senator and Commission Co-Chair Jack Hart

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in South Boston on August 9, 2006. Over 40 residents attended.

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

- Capital improvements such as the McCormack Bathhouse and the boardwalk
- Cleaner water
- Beaches are a gathering place for community
- Easy accessibility by foot, car, and public transportation
- Great views of Harbor and Islands

### WHAT'S NOT WORKING:

- Poor maintenance and infrequent trash removal
- Need for programming such as swim lessons, entertainment, and boating rentals
- Need for more parking spaces
- Boardwalks need more entry/exit points for strollers and wheelchairs
- Need more beach patrols and lifeguards to ensure public safety



### BEACH INFORMATION

#### PLEASURE BAY

**Bathhouse:** no  
**Bathrooms:** yes  
**Snack Bar/Food:** yes  
**Shade:** yes  
**Water:** yes  
**Parking:** yes  
**Transportation:** yes (#9 or 10 bus)

#### L/M STREET BEACHES

**Bathhouse:** L Street Bathhouse  
**Bathrooms:** yes (at bathhouse)  
**Snack Bar/Food:** no  
**Shade:** yes  
**Water:** yes  
**Parking:** yes  
**Transportation:** yes (JFK/UMass T stop)

#### CARSON BEACH

**Bathhouse:** McCormack Bathhouse  
**Bathrooms:** yes  
**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (July/August only)  
**Shade:** yes  
**Water:** yes  
**Parking:** yes  
**Transportation:** yes (JFK/UMass T stop)

# DORCHESTER PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY



## Malibu/Savin Hill and Tenean Beaches

*“The pine trees have a fungus inside, we keep losing trees...A landscaper spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in plantings, the guys that cut the grass killed everything, including the blooming day lilies...Most of the trees are dead, the other ones are dying. This isn't nitpicking. You spend \$2.5 million and I look between the boardwalk and the shore and it's a wasteland.”* – **John Moran, Dorchester resident**

*“With the cleanup of the water, now it's time to look on the land side and try to make it the best that it can be. DCR has done a lot of capital improvements, and I give them credit...but I also have concerns...we know they have had a hard time in the past few years, but the maintenance is unacceptable.”*

– **Senator and Commission Co-Chair Jack Hart**

*“We use the beaches a lot. We take the kids to the beach at least once a week...and I can tell you that we need more recreational programs.”*

– **Jessie Alvira, Washington Heights Tenants Association**

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in Dorchester on August 10, 2006. Over 40 residents attended.

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

- Beaches are an important community gathering place
- Easy accessibility from neighborhoods and by public transportation
- Boardwalk is heavily used and appreciated
- Clean water
- User-friendly amenities like water fountains, foot showers and playgrounds

### WHAT'S NOT WORKING:

- Contaminated storm water run-off and siltation
- Poor maintenance and beach upkeep—need doggie bags and more trash barrels
- Bathhouse at Malibu/Savin Hill is unusable and unsafe
- Need for programming—swim lessons, kayaks, canoes, and sailing
- Need better enforcement of rules and more police

### BEACH INFORMATION

#### MALIBU/SAVIN HILL BEACH

**Miles:** 0.5 miles

**Bathhouse:** yes, but inadequately maintained

**Bathrooms:** no (little league puts up port a pottys in May)

**Water:** yes

**Snack Bar/Food:** no

**Shade:** yes

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (Savin Hill T stop)

#### TENEAN BEACH

**Miles:** 0.25 miles

**Bathhouse:** no (demolished when beach rehabilitated)

**Bathrooms:** no

**Water:** yes

**Snack Bar/Food:** no

**Shade:** yes

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (#20 bus)

## Wollaston Beach

*“Getting people to come back to the beach is about two things—it has to be clean, and the water has to be safe.”*

– Karen, Quincy resident



*“Now that we’re bringing the beach up to its full potential with all the construction, we all want to make sure it’s a safe clean beach.”* – Representative Bruce Ayers

*“The Friends of Wollaston Beach was set up this summer, and 40 or so people came out and are interested in issues like beach cleanup, water quality, police patrols, jurisdictional complications, and more beach activities.”*

– Quincy City Council President and Commissioner Douglas Gutro

*“15 years ago, there was a Beaches Commission which has led to the improvements you see going on today...but now it’s time to go back and look at it again.... Today, people are concerned about maintenance and water quality.”*

– Senator Michael Morrissey

*“I think the beauty of Wollaston Beach is unsurpassed. I have lived here for 42 years and never get sick of its beauty. If you walk down to the water’s edge and turn around you won’t even believe where you are, it’s magnificent.”* – Quincy resident

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in Quincy on September 14, 2006. Over 40 people attended and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, and residents.

### WHAT’S WORKING WELL:

- Beautiful views of city skyline and harbor islands
- Beach is an active public space—draws a diverse group for many uses
- Easy accessibility for pedestrians and bikers
- Capital improvements—new seawall and Brett Bathhouse
- Natural beauty—trees, bird life, sunrises, dunegrass

### WHAT’S NOT WORKING:

- Water is not clean consistently, better flagging is needed
- Landscaping and maintenance is poor—sidewalk weeds, trash on beach
- Need more programming and events—historical signage, fireworks, movies
- Need more police presence for safety and rules enforcement
- Speeding traffic on Quincy Shore Drive is hazardous

### BEACH INFORMATION

**Miles:** 1.5 miles

**Bathhouse:** Brett Bathhouse (open July—September)

**Bathrooms:** yes (seasonal, at bathhouse)

**Water:** yes (at bathhouse), new fountains to be installed as part of DCR work this spring

**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (take-out and eat-in restaurants)

**Shade:** scheduled to be completed by DCR this spring

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (#211 bus)

## Nantasket Beach

*“As far as trash... it’s a societal problem, not just a maintenance problem.”* – **Mark Fournier, Director of Public Works, Town of Hull**

*“It’s always been a tradition to visit Hull. I think that Nantasket Beach is the most beautiful of the state-owned beaches near Boston.”*

– **Senator and Commissioner Robert Hedlund**



*“Just like we do with schools, we build bathhouses and then don’t fund their upkeep. What we’re trying to do is find a solution so we don’t wait another 10 years.”*

– **Representative Garrett Bradley**

*“The Commission is committed to solving problems like trash on the beaches, and we need citizens to be our watchdogs.”*

– **Hull Selectman and Commissioner Joan Meschino**



*“We have a beautiful bathhouse, and we’d like to see it maintained properly. They do a fabulous job, but I think it should be a priority. It’s a great asset for this town.”* – **Jeanne Paguin, Hull resident**

*“About what the beach will look at for the next 100 years... The historic ocean vista [should] be preserved for at least 100 years to come.”*

– **Lory Newmyer, Hull resident**

### BEACH INFORMATION

**Miles:** 1.3 miles

**Bathhouse:** yes (Mary Jeanette Murray Bathhouse, rebuilt 1996)

**Bathrooms:** yes

**Water:** yes

**Snack Bar/Food:** yes (take-out and eat-in restaurants)

**Shade:** yes

**Parking:** yes

**Public Transportation:** yes (#714 bus)

### PUBLIC HEARING HIGHLIGHTS:

The Commission hosted a public hearing in Hull on August 17, 2006. Over 40 people attended and the Commission heard from elected officials, community leaders, public safety officials, artists, small business owners and residents.

### WHAT’S WORKING WELL:

- Clean water
- Beautiful sand
- Family-friendly beach
- View of harbor islands
- Historic architecture and buildings

### WHAT’S NOT WORKING:

- Seawall not sustainable over long term
- Trash litters the beach
- Facilities inaccessible at key hours
- Capital maintenance lacking—on bathhouse, nearby buildings, and beach access points
- Need improved public transportation opportunities—trolley, ferry or bike paths
- Need greater police presence

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## Management and Budget Analysis

As many of the concerns expressed by the public have focused on the adequacy of resources dedicated to the beaches, the Commission retained budget and management consultants Raphael and Raphael to provide an assessment of current beach-related capital and operating funds. The Commission also directed Raphael and Raphael to prepare an analysis of any additional resources needed to address the problems identified by the Commission and the public.

Raphael and Raphael based its assessment on information provided by state agencies, including the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, the Comptroller's Office, and numerous representatives from DCR. The complete management and budget analysis report is available on line at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org).

Based on Raphael and Raphael's analysis, operating expenditures for the metropolitan beaches for fiscal year 2006 are estimated at \$1,688,292, including costs associated with temporary and permanent staff, operation of equipment, and materials.

DCR managers with direct responsibility for beach operations and maintenance acknowledged that current levels of staffing, operating funds, and equipment produce maintenance efforts that do not meet the agency's own standards and have provoked widespread public criticism.

DCR regional and district managers provided a detailed assessment of the actions they felt would rectify maintenance shortcomings on the beaches. This assessment included an analysis of staffing and equipment needed to address current problems.

- **DCR managers believe that the current practice of staffing beaches primarily with seasonal workers contributes to maintenance problems.** Because seasonal employees frequently lack key capabilities (e.g., the commercial driver's license needed to operate some machinery), they cannot reliably undertake maintenance activities. The managers suggested a renewed commitment to accomplishing beach maintenance with more full-time employees.
- **DCR managers identified a need for 63 additional full-time staff, with associated annual payroll expenditures of \$2,787,040, to address shortfalls in beach maintenance, as well as \$493,500 in additional annual operating costs for new equipment.** New staff would include approximately 40 new maintenance positions, with the additional staff including recreation facility personnel, rangers, volunteer coordinators and natural resource specialists. The DCR managers expressed confidence that this additional staff would yield improved maintenance, greater support for recreation and education programs, and better enforcement of existing beach rules and regulations. Additional details are provided in Table 2.1 on page 20.
- **The total projected capital cost of the new maintenance equipment identified by DCR managers to address shortfalls in beach maintenance is \$1,440,000.** This figure would support the purchase of approximately 20 new vehicles, including dump trucks, trash packers and beach sanitizers. Additional details are provided in Table 2.2 on page 21.

TABLE 2.1 **ADDITIONAL REQUIRED MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS STAFF AND ASSOCIATED COSTS**

Source: DCR, modified by Raphael and Raphael

<b>STAFF ADDITIONS</b>						
<b>DESCRIPTION/TITLE</b>	<b># FTEs</b>	<b>SALARY PER FTE-ANNUAL</b>	<b>FRINGE (PAID BY STATE, NOT DCR)</b>	<b>ITD CHARGES*</b>	<b>TOTAL PER FTE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>NORTH REGION</b>						
Laborer II (CDL), Grade 10, Unit 2	5	28,516	9,302	121	37,938	189,692
Division Foreman, Grade 17, Unit 2	1	40,657	13,262	121	54,040	54,040
Laborer I (CDL), Grade 9, Unit 2	4	27,437	8,950	121	36,507	146,029
Laborer II (CDL), Grade 10, Unit 2	4	28,516	9,302	121	37,938	151,753
Laborer II (CDL), Grade 9, Unit 2	5	27,437	8,950	121	36,507	182,537
MEO I, Grade 13, Unit 3	6	33,797	11,025	121	44,942	269,653
Natural Resources Specialist, Grade 21, Unit 9	1	50,686	16,534	121	67,340	67,340
Park Foreman I, Grade 15	4	36,299	11,841	121	48,260	193,040
Ranger I, Grade 14, Unit 2	6.5	34,398	11,221	121	45,740	297,308
Rec Facility Manager, Grade 12	4	30,950	10,096	121	41,166	164,664
Rec Facility Manager, Grade 20	2	47,242	15,410	121	62,773	125,546
Volunteer Services Coordinator II, Grade 15, Unit 2	1	36,299	11,841	121	48,260	48,260
<b>Total North Region</b>	<b>43.5</b>					<b>1,889,862</b>
<b>HARBOR REGION</b>						
Forest and Parks II, Grade 16, Unit 2	2	38,448	12,542	121	51,111	102,222
Laborer II (CDL)	6	28,516	9,302	121	37,938	227,630
Laborer II (CDL), Grade 10, Unit 2	4	28,516	9,302	121	37,938	151,753
MEO I, Grade 13, Unit 3	2	33,797	11,025	121	44,942	89,884
Natural Resources Specialist, Grade 21, Unit 9	1	50,686	16,534	121	67,340	67,340
Ranger I, Grade 14, Unit 2	3.5	34,398	11,221	121	45,740	160,089
Volunteer Services Coordinator II, Grade 15, Unit 2	1	36,299	11,841	121	48,260	48,260
<b>Total Harbor Region</b>	<b>19.5</b>					<b>847,178</b>
<b>HARBOR REGION, CONTRACTED SERVICES</b>						
Landscape improvements contract						50,000
<b>Total Staff Additions</b>	<b>63</b>					<b>2,787,040<sup>‡</sup></b>

\* Information Technology Division charge

‡ The figure for additional staff expenditures represents 100% of the cost of 63 new, full-time staff members. Some of the time of these staff members could be allocated to other DCR facilities in off-peak periods.

**TABLE 2.2 ADDITIONAL REQUIRED MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT AND ASSOCIATED CAPITAL AND OPERATING COSTS**

Source: DCR; modified by Raphael and Raphael

<b>EQUIPMENT ADDITIONS</b>					
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>QTY</b>	<b>PURCHASE PRICE PER UNIT</b>	<b>ANNUAL OPERATING COST PER UNIT</b>	<b>TOTAL PURCHASE COST</b>	<b>TOTAL ANNUAL OPERATING COST</b>
<b>NORTH REGION</b>					
One-ton Dump Truck	6	30,000	13,030	180,000	78,180
Four-wheel-drive Gator (2 with flat deck back for rescue and 2 with dump bodies)	4	8,000	10,850	32,000	43,400
Five-ton dump truck	3	75,000	13,030	225,000	39,090
Arrow board	2	5,000	1,440	10,000	2,880
Beach sanitizer	2	47,000	800	94,000	1,600
Catch basin truck as needed for blocked CB's for region	1	75,000	4,450	75,000	4,450
Landscape truck with dual cab	1	45,000	15,800	45,000	15,800
Passenger van	1	—	20,084	—	20,084
Pick-up truck	4	—	20,984	—	83,936
Tractor for beach sanitizer	2	65,000	7,550	130,000	15,100
Trash-packer truck	1	75,000	20,630	75,000	20,630
<b>Total North Region</b>				<b>866,000</b>	<b>325,150</b>
<b>HARBOR REGION</b>					
General parks–beaches facility maintenance equipment	1	—	50,000	—	50,000
Green machine	3	68,000	22,713	204,000	68,140
New front-end loader	1	125,000	8,950	125,000	8,950
Trash-packer truck—11 cubic yd capacity	1	90,000	20,630	90,000	20,630
Trash-packer truck—30 cubic yd capacity	1	155,000	20,630	155,000	20,630
<b>Total Harbor Region</b>				<b>574,000</b>	<b>118,350</b>
<b>Total Equipment Additions</b>				<b>1,440,000</b>	<b>493,500</b>

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- **DCR managers also report that agency administrative procedures and competitive impediments create a time-consuming and inefficient process for hiring new maintenance workers.** Agency actions to streamline this process are needed to allow timely and efficient hiring of maintenance staff.

Raphael and Raphael's analysis also highlighted a major concern about an imbalance between DCR's capital and operational spending. Over the past decade new capital expenditures on several metropolitan beaches have not been matched by increases in maintenance and operations budgets—which have decreased in real terms. This has created a situation where the Commonwealth invests in capital assets but then does not budget enough to operate and maintain those assets adequately (a problem not unique to DCR). If the value of the public's investment in the beaches is to be protected, future planning and budgeting will need to address this problem directly.



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## 3. Findings and Recommendations

### Overview

Over the course of the hearings the Commission heard from hundreds of people across the metropolitan region, including local and state elected officials, agency staff and officials,



experts, advocates, young people and the general public. The public's testimony and participation increased the Commission's understanding of the challenges that occur throughout the system as well as those that are unique to individual beaches.

DCR's ambitious mission is "world-class parks and management." Based on testimony and

findings of fact, the Commission has concluded that the Commonwealth is falling short of this goal on the beaches.

The Commission supports DCR's long-term commitment to world-class parks and management, but recognizing today's fiscal reality and the competition for limited resources, it has concluded that near-term efforts must focus on addressing some of the beaches' most obvious problems. The Commission believes that the public has the right to expect that basic beach functions will be done well—that trash is picked up, bathrooms are clean, sand is free of debris, grass is cut, regulations are enforced, and public safety is assured. Accomplishing these fundamental steps can move us toward our goal of creating beaches we can be proud of.

**The Commission believes that the public has the right to expect that basic beach functions will be done well—that trash is picked up, bathrooms are clean, sand is free of debris, grass is cut, regulations are enforced, and public safety is ensured.**

It is clear that additional public resources will be needed to address many of the challenges that are preventing the beaches from reaching their potential. But money alone will not solve the problem. Improved oversight, better management, productivity improvements that result from training and equipment upgrades, and enhanced partnerships between the state and community-based coalitions must all play vital roles. And beach users also must contribute by taking more personal responsibility at the beaches.

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## FINDINGS

Over the course of its public hearings and in discussions with agency staff responsible for beach maintenance and operations, several themes emerged that lie at the core of the Commission's assessment:

- **The public beaches represent an extraordinary asset for the people of the Commonwealth, and have benefited from significant capital improvements over the last fifteen years.** However, needed capital improvements have not yet been implemented on several beaches, so that amenities and conditions still vary greatly from one community to the next.
- **Inadequate state resources dedicated to beach maintenance and operations, including recreational and educational programming, have created conditions that keep the public away or diminish the quality of their experience when they visit.** These conditions have persisted and in many cases worsened over the last fifteen years as staffing levels have decreased and the equipment needed to improve productivity has fallen into disrepair.
- **Some of the greatest success stories on the beaches over the last five years are the result of partnerships among the state, local government, and communities to develop programs and events that draw people to beaches and create memorable experiences that keep them coming back.**
- **Both the communities and DCR officials share a common understanding of the problems we face in taking full advantage of the beaches' potential.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission's key recommendations:

- **Dedicate additional resources to support beach maintenance and operations,** to hire additional qualified staff, and to purchase necessary maintenance equipment. DCR managers estimate that this will require additional annual expenditures for staff of \$2.7 million and an additional annual expenditure of \$0.5 million in operating costs for new equipment in 2007 dollars.

These additional resources are critical to addressing maintenance needs, but any commitment of additional resources by the Commonwealth must be linked to management reforms that improve supervision, enhance staff productivity and lead to real accountability to local communities.

- **Strengthen the capabilities of local friends groups and community-based partnerships to work with the state to provide beach programming,** support beautification, and sponsor special events that bring the beaches to life. Funding to support these activities should be sought from multiple sources, including the Commonwealth, but also including local fundraising, foundations, and revenues generated at the beaches. Potential funding sources include:
  - > Beach parking/concession revenues that currently pass on to the General Fund
  - > Creation of a metropolitan beaches license plate

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- > Philanthropic matching grants
  - > Local fund raising
  - > DCR funds, which should include a provision for designating at least \$1 for programming out of every \$20 spent
- **Fund the remaining planned and promised beach capital improvements** and additional improvements where current conditions limit beach use or present public safety concerns.
  - **Establish a Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board to work with DCR and the local communities** to ensure sustained advocacy, sufficient resources, increased accountability, and the effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations.
  - **Secure a commitment from the Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to report to the Commission and the communities within 60 days on the administration's plan for addressing the Commission's findings.** This plan should address specific near-term actions that will be implemented to improve conditions on the beaches in time for the 2007 summer beach season as well as an overall strategy and timeline for how to address longer-term challenges and reforms.

The following sections amplify these recommendations, address additional concerns common to all of the beaches, and spell out those issues that are specific to individual beaches.

#### **LESSONS LEARNED: BACK TO THE BEACHES PROGRAM**

The Joint Commission on the Future of the Boston Harbor Beaches, established in 1991 by the Commonwealth and the City of Boston, evaluated several of the metropolitan beaches. That commission made several recommendations, including the "Back to the Beaches Program," which resulted in significant capital improvements at some (but not all) of the region's beaches. Many other recommendations, however—including the commission's call for increased maintenance and operations funding, and its push for creation of an organization that would encourage creative new partnerships and advocate for more funding—were never implemented. The Metropolitan Beaches Commission believes that such a renewed commitment to maintenance and operations, and establishment of an organization to advance advocacy, partnerships and programs is essential to the success of the beaches today.

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## Improved Accountability and Coordination

### FINDINGS

**Each of the beaches is an asset for its community, but considered together the group represents an extraordinary regional amenity** that provides more than one million people with access to Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay. To fully tap the public potential of the beaches will require sustained public attention, improved maintenance, enhanced programming, improved state/local planning and cooperation, and the nurturing of local partnerships and friends groups.

**No one unit or individual in DCR has clear/sole responsibility for the metropolitan beaches.** As a result, there is a lack of accountability—to local government, to elected officials or to the public—for the state of these beaches. Local officials have cited good working relationships with DCR on-site personnel who work diligently to respond to identified problems, but these officials have been frustrated by the inability of on-site staff to get consistent support within the agency for resolving identified problems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board to represent all of the beachfront communities in working with DCR to address issues associated with the beaches. Create or designate an aligned nonprofit corporation to secure and manage funds for beach enhancements and expanded programming.
- Create a separate unit/division (or appoint a single person) within DCR to plan, manage, program and promote these beaches as a unit.
- Create and implement a 10-year master plan for the metropolitan beaches, developed jointly by DCR and the proposed Metropolitan Beach Advisory Board.

## Maintenance and Operations

### FINDINGS

**Inadequate maintenance is a substantial problem on most beaches—keeping the public away or diminishing the experience for many beachgoers.** The Commission heard this concern throughout its public hearing process. Problems range from inadequate trash removal to insufficient cleaning of sand to and inability to undertake basic repairs—changing lightbulbs or fixing broken water fountains at existing facilities—in a timely way. These problems are directly attributable to the lack of staff and equipment needed to undertake basic maintenance. DCR managers share the public’s conclusion that current maintenance efforts are not adequate.

DCR’s current practice of staffing seasonal operations (such as beaches) primarily with seasonal employees is problematic. Many seasonal workers lack the qualifications or skills (e.g., commercial driver’s license, ability to operate heavy machinery such as beach sanitizers) needed for maintaining the beaches properly. Adding full-time employees with the appro-

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prate skills would allow the beaches to be maintained in an optimal manner. Those same employees would provide an ancillary benefit, splitting their time in the off-season between beaches and other DCR assets.

DCR managers have estimated that approximately 63 full-time positions would be needed to adequately address maintenance and operations concerns on the beaches between Lynn and Nantasket, including approximately 40 maintenance positions. Additional equipment including sand sifters, trash packers, dump trucks and other vehicles would need to be purchased to facilitate improved maintenance. New staff will need to have the appropriate qualifications and certifications to enable them to operate such equipment.

**Communities expressed strong frustrations about the lack of maintenance agreements or standards to which they may hold DCR accountable.** DCR has acknowledged its inability to meet its own minimum standards for scheduling maintenance and other activities because of a shortage of personnel and equipment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Commonwealth should allocate additional funds to adequately maintain and operate the metropolitan beaches. Based on the assessment of DCR managers, the annual cost of improved beach maintenance and operations would be approximately \$2.7 million for staffing and \$500,000 for the operating cost of new equipment. DCR managers estimate that \$1.44 million will also be needed to purchase necessary maintenance equipment.
- DCR should develop and make public its maintenance plans and standards for each beach. These standards/plans should provide the basis for formal agreements with each municipality on the level of maintenance to expect.
- DCR should appoint a “beach manager” for each beach to serve as the primary local contact for issues of maintenance and operations.
- DCR should address administrative impediments to hiring maintenance workers by streamlining its hiring process, and, if necessary, by adding human resource employees or consultants.
- Competitive impediments should also be addressed by evaluating salary disparities and advancement opportunities.

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## Capital Improvements

### FINDINGS

Several of the metropolitan beaches have benefited substantially from capital improvements over the past decades; some are still waiting for promised improvements, while others lack even the most basic facilities. As additional capital improvements are advanced, it is imperative that the Commonwealth also budget adequately for increased operating expenses associated with maintaining these assets to ensure that the public's commitments to enhancing the beaches and associated facilities are protected over the long term.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Complete the program of capital improvements that is already approved and/or scheduled, including funds for Winthrop beach renourishment and rehabilitation; Nahant causeway and beach rehabilitation; Nantasket renourishment and repairs; and Savin Hill and Tenean bathhouses.
- Secure funds to complete several additional capital projects and repairs critical to the public's ability to use the beaches, including rehabilitation of the Ward Bathhouse serving Lynn and Nahant; creation of showers and changing areas at Spectacle Island; construction of an equipment shed in East Boston; and rehabilitation of the Sugar Bowl in South Boston.
- DCR should create and implement a 10-year master plan for the metropolitan beaches.

## Programming and Partnerships

### FINDINGS

Though most of the beaches are easy and inexpensive to get to, there are very few programs or events—like concerts, festivals, fireworks displays, family fun days, educational programs, contests or even swimming and sailing lessons—to attract people to the beach during the swimming season, and even fewer during the spring, fall and winter.

What programming exists is popular, successful, much in demand, and the work of local “Friends” groups collaborating with local government and community groups.

Youth groups, in particular, have cited programming as an important element in making the beaches more appealing and have suggested swimming and sailing lessons, sports leagues, inter- and intra-beach competitions and other activities as ways to enliven the beaches and encourage interaction between beachfront communities. DCR does not have the resources to support these types of activities, which are seen by the public as important elements of a beach experience.

Currently, fees for parking at the beaches are directed to the General Fund rather than to the beach where they were generated. Consequently, increased beach use by the public results in higher operations costs without providing additional resources.

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The one exception is Revere Beach, where an innovative agreement between DCR and the City has allowed revenues generated from DCR parking to be used to provide enhanced landscaping, maintenance and programming, and has generated new enthusiasm for the beach. This arrangement ensures that revenues generated by increased beach use can be used to enhance the experience of beach users.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create or designate an independent, nonprofit corporation whose primary purpose is to secure and distribute resources to local or regional partnerships such as friends groups, local government, other public/private partnerships, or nonprofit organizations to expand beach programming, events and activities and otherwise enhance the beach-going experience. The group will work with the Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board and DCR to develop guidelines for allocating funds.
- Direct revenue from parking lots and other vendors at these beaches, which currently goes to the General Fund (largely) back to the beachfront community where it was generated to be used for programming and enhancements to the beach.
- Direct revenue generated from fines for littering, parking or dog violations (largely) back to the beachfront community where they were generated to be used for programming and enhancements of the beach.
- DCR should dedicate resources to supporting recreational and educational programming on the beaches—a minimum of \$1 for programming and activating the beaches for every \$20 it spends on maintenance and operations.

### MODELS THAT WORK: THE REVERE BEACH PARTNERSHIP



One of the most important things the Commission heard was that it will take more than better maintenance to bring people “back to the beach.” In every community the Commission visited we heard great ideas for new programs and activities like swimming and sailing lessons, fishing tournaments, concerts, kite festivals, and fireworks. Even a winter swim like the Passion Plunge, held in early February, can attract hundreds—or thousands—of people.

In 2001 Revere Mayor Thomas Ambrosino convened a “charrette” to develop a plan to improve conditions on Revere Beach. More than 75 people—including state and local officials and representatives of nonprofit organizations, including Revere Cares and the Revere Beautification Committee—attended the daylong session organized by Save the Harbor/Save the Bay.

The resulting report has served as a blueprint for revitalizing the nation’s oldest public beach. The charrette also led to creation of The Revere Beach Partnership to secure resources for programming and beach enhancement. Over the past 5 years the RBP has raised money from individuals, businesses, the state and regional nonprofits, effectively leveraging city dollars and dedicated funds from a DCR parking lot for added landscaping along Revere Beach Boulevard, kayaks for the summer boating program, and events and activities, including a sand castle festival that now attracts more than 100,000 visitors to the beach each summer.

The Revere Beach Partnership is a model for those seeking to create or strengthen local “friends” groups to activate beaches and improve the quality of life in beachfront communities.

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- Secure funds to support local partnerships willing to undertake programming and other enhancements on the region's beaches, as well as the region's youth sailing and boating programs.
  - Based on the success of the Revere Beach Partnership in enhancing the experience on that beach, the Commission encourages The Boston Foundation, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, local businesses and others to help provide and leverage additional resources and expertise to strengthen existing friends groups and partnerships in the beachfront communities, and to work with communities to create new groups where appropriate.
  - New sources of revenue (such as a metropolitan beaches license plate) should be developed, with the revenue going to support programming and enhancements to the region's public beaches.

## Increased Personal Responsibility

### FINDINGS

All the participants in the inquiry agree that beach users have to take increased personal responsibility for their behavior at the beach, to respect the rights of others, and to pick up their trash and dog waste. However, participants also agree that DCR has a responsibility to educate the public about the rules and make it as easy as possible to follow them, with clear signage and appropriate facilities for disposing of trash and dog waste.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommends assigning additional DCR rangers to the beaches. With the increase in staff, the rangers will be better equipped to:

- Take steps to better inform the public about the rules.
- Increase enforcement of the rules, with citations and fines where appropriate.
- Make it easy to find a place to put trash and handle dog waste.
- Encourage recycling.

## Policing and Public Safety

### FINDINGS

The Commission heard from local and state public safety officials, including members of both the local and state police, and the public about traffic, crime, parking, vandalism and other public safety and enforcement issues at the region's public beaches.

Although primary jurisdiction for the beaches and parkways belongs to the State Police, in most cases police, fire, and other emergency services on the beaches are provided by the



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host community. By all accounts, they appear to work well together on the beaches, yet in some cases members of the public remain unclear about whom to call.

The Commission also asked Raphael and Raphael to gather additional information about the costs of dedicated State Police beach patrols (see Appendices, page 38). They reported that, although the amount of funds for dedicated patrols has remained the same since 2003, the number of patrol hours has decreased by approximately 20% as hourly costs have increased.

It is important to note that local and state police and other first responders have other important responsibilities and all face budget pressures and tough choices about how to use limited resources.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continue to look for additional resources to help beachfront communities pay for local police and emergency services.
- Make sufficient funds available to the State Police for dedicated patrols of parkways and beaches during the peak season.
- Encourage state and local police to continue to work with DCR and elected officials to continue to improve cooperation and communications between the agencies and the public.

## **Sand Quality and Condition**

### **FINDINGS**

With some exceptions, the sand on the region's public beaches comes from somewhere else. Many of these beaches are manmade and revert to their natural state as mudflats, tide pools, and cobble if left alone. DCR trucks in sand to replace the sand that storms and tide wash away.

Though the Commission heard some reports that the quality of the sand varies from beach to beach, it appears that all the sand comes from the same sources and meets the same standards when it is delivered. In areas where the beaches are intensively used, however, especially around access points, parking lots and public facilities, the sand is often dirty and full of glass, weeds and other small debris, which makes the beach experience unpleasant or even unsafe. Though DCR has some sand-sifting equipment, it lacks sufficient equipment and qualified staff to perform this vital task as often as it is needed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Funds should be made available to DCR to purchase, maintain, and operate additional sand sifters, and to support regular sifting on these beaches regularly all season long.

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## Water Transportation and the Harbor Island Beaches



### FINDINGS

In every beachfront community from Lynn to Nantasket the Commission heard from people who want to see better water transportation access to the Boston Harbor Islands National Park, and the restoration of regular seasonal service that once provided access to the beaches from Boston and elsewhere.

The Commission also heard from experts, advocates and users alike that the largest obstacle to increased visitation to the park is the cost and availability of water transportation, which remains beyond the means of many families in the region.

Island beaches are undiscovered jewels for many visitors to the park but would be improved by the addition of showers and changing areas.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Secure funds to build showers and an enclosed changing area so that visitors to the beach on Spectacle Island can change in privacy and wash off sand and salt.
- Secure funds to subsidize low-cost family fares to the great new beach at Spectacle Island as a good first step. Promote the availability of subsidized tickets in local and community newspapers for residents of the region who would otherwise not be able to afford to enjoy the park.



## Nuisance Algae in Nahant Bay and Broad Sound

### FINDINGS

Each summer beachgoers in Lynn and Nahant have confronted a unique obstacle to the full enjoyment of their beaches.

The problem is caused by drifting brown algae, *pilayella littoralis*, that are unique to Nahant Bay and Broad Sound. The algae wash up on parts of the beach, causing a terrible odor as they decompose on the shore.

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Despite the dramatic reduction in nutrients in Massachusetts Bay and Broad Sound brought about by the Boston Harbor cleanup, local conditions help *pilayella* thrive.

In the past, the Commonwealth has spent more than \$300,000 to understand the scope of the problem and to identify ways to address it—without much success.

While improvements in local wastewater treatment may ultimately reduce the scale of this algae bloom, the most promising approach in the short term (pioneered by Cliff Goudey, Director, Center for Fisheries Engineering Research at MIT) seems straightforward: prompt removal of the algae from the beach to an appropriate landfill.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Make funds available to Lynn and Nahant to undertake a pilot program for removing these nuisance algae from the beach, to dewater them, and to dispose of them in an appropriate fashion.

## **Winthrop Beach Renourishment Project**

### **FINDINGS**

Though the shoreline is beautiful and the water quality excellent, there is in fact no “bathing beach” in Winthrop.

For nearly a decade the residents of Winthrop have watched helplessly as storms and coastal erosion have swept the sand from their beach, jeopardizing public safety and preventing full enjoyment of the beach.

Though sand from upland sites is mostly used to replace beach sand that has washed away, DCR’s engineers feel that upland sand is not a practical way to renourish Winthrop’s beach. Transporting the sand makes this option quite expensive and can disrupt local traffic and business.

Today, the DCR has a plan to renourish the beach with off-shore sand mined from an area of ocean floor in Mass Bay off Hull. The Commonwealth’s Division of Marine Fisheries has designated this same area as critical habitat for lobsters and cod, both important commercial species here in the Commonwealth, but the value of this area as habitat remains in dispute among the state’s environmental agencies.

DCR’s beach renourishment plan is under administrative review, and requires further approval by the US Army Corps of Engineers before it can proceed. It may require measures to mitigate any potential impacts on the habitat and species of critical concern as well.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Commission urges that all of the parties immediately take appropriate steps to resolve the situation, so that this great beach can be returned to full public use.

- Recognizing that this situation is certain to arise again, The Division of Marine Fisheries and DCR should to work together to find an appropriate site for off-shore sand mining, and take steps to make the approval process less cumbersome and contentious.

## Water Quality and the Beach Flagging System

### FINDINGS

After 20 years and more than \$4.5 billion, the Boston Harbor Cleanup is a remarkable success story, and has had a dramatic positive impact on water quality in the harbor and around the bay.

Over the past months the Commission has examined nine years of water-quality data from the Boston Harbor beaches gathered by the MWRA, and it has assembled and analyzed one year of data (2005) for all the metropolitan beaches.

The data on water-quality testing in Table 3.1 show that several beaches—Nahant Beach, Winthrop Beach and Nantasket—are safe for swimming every day. Others, like Pleasure Bay and City Point, are nearly as clean. Other beaches—in Lynn, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester and Quincy—have more work to do.

TABLE 3.1 EXCEEDANCES OF THE FEDERAL WATER QUALITY STANDARD FOR SWIMMING, IN 2005, BY SAMPLE			
BEACH	SINGLE SAMPLE EXCEEDANCES	NUMBER OF SAMPLES COLLECTED	PERCENT EXCEEDANCE
<b>TESTED DAILY</b>			
Pleasure Bay	1	52	1.9%
City Point	2	52	3.8%
Carson	10	106	9.4%
M Street	6	52	9.8%
Tenean	6	48	12.5%
Constitution	23	156	14.7%
Wollaston	40	212	18.9%
<b>TESTED WEEKLY</b>			
Nahant	0	52	0.0%
Nantasket	0	48	0.0%
Winthrop	0	13	0.0%
Revere*	7 (2)	80 (48)	8.75% (4.2%)
Savin Hill	2	15	13.3%
King's	8	51	15.7%
Malibu	3	15	20.0%

\* A broken sewer pipe in Saugus was responsible for 5 of 7 exceedances in 2005. The numbers in brackets exclude readings caused by the break.

It is important to note that at some beaches, work is already underway to address the water-quality issues that remain. In South Boston, the MWRA and the Boston Water and Sewer Commission are in the middle of a major improvement program that will produce some of the cleanest urban beaches in America. The City of Quincy has invested nearly \$30 million in ongoing improvements that have significantly reduced the amount of pollutants discharged into Quincy Bay.

The Commission also took a close look at the flagging system used to inform the public about water quality on the beaches and discovered that it was often inaccurate. As is noted in tables 3.2 and 3.3, on many days at many beaches it had the effect of misinforming rather than informing beachgoers about whether it was safe to swim.

These beaches belong to all of us. It is not enough simply to test water, record the results, and post the results at a beach. We have a responsibility to identify the problems and to work together with federal, state, and local officials to address them.

**TABLE 3.2 RED FLAG ACCURACY IN 2005 FOR BEACHES WITH DAILY TESTING\***

BEACH	DAYS WITH SINGLE SAMPLE EXCEEDANCES	DAYS WITH SAMPLES	TRUE POSITIVES	FALSE POSITIVES	POSITIVE TRUE/FALSE RATIO	% OF DAYS WITH EXCEEDANCE WITH A RED FLAG
Pleasure Bay	1	52	1	2	33.3%	100.0%
Wollaston	22	53	15	9	57.6%	68.2%
Tenean	6	48	4	9	30.8%	66.7%
City Point	2	52	1	3	25.0%	50.0%
Constitution	13	52	6	1	85.7%	46.1%
Carson	8	53	3	6	33.3%	37.5%
M Street	6	52	1	6	14.3%	16.7%

\* A true positive is a red flag that was posted on a day with exceedance, and a false positive is a red flag posted on a day without exceedance.

**TABLE 3.3 BLUE FLAG ACCURACY IN 2005 FOR BEACHES WITH DAILY TESTING\***

BEACH	DAYS WITH SINGLE SAMPLE EXCEEDANCES	DAYS WITH SAMPLES	TRUE NEGATIVES	FALSE NEGATIVES	NEAG-TIVE TRUE/FALSE RATIO	OVER-ALL TRUE/FALSE RATIO	% OF DAYS WITH EXCEEDANCE WITH A RED FLAG
Constitution	13	52	38	7	84.4%	84.6%	97.4%
Pleasure Bay	1	52	49	0	100.0%	96.2%	96.1%
City Point	2	52	47	1	97.9%	92.3%	94.0%
M Street	6	52	40	5	88.9%	78.8%	86.9%
Carson	8	53	38	6	86.4%	77.4%	84.4%
Tenean	6	48	33	2	94.2%	77.1%	78.6%
Wollaston	22	53	22	7	75.9%	69.8%	71.0%

\* In this case, a true negative is a blue flag that was posted on a day with no exceedance, and a false negative is a blue flag posted on a day with an exceedance. It is impossible to evaluate the accuracy of the flagging system without daily samples.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- At beaches where more than 9% of the samples (or 9% of the sample days) exceed the federal single-sample water quality standard in any given year (and where there is no comprehensive plan underway to address the situation as there is in South Boston/North Dorchester Bay), DCR should undertake a sanitary survey and such additional testing, modeling and water-quality monitoring as may be appropriate to identify both the problem and potential solutions before June 2007.
- DCR should work with the US Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, local officials, advocates and other stakeholders to develop and implement an effective method for informing the public about water quality on each of the metropolitan beaches, and issue a regular report on both water quality and the accuracy of the flagging system for each beach where more than 9% of the samples (or 9% of the sample days) exceed the federal single-sample water quality standard.
- The Commonwealth should expand its revolving loan program to help municipalities find the money they need to make necessary improvements in their sewage, wastewater, and stormwater treatment facilities.



For further discussion of water quality issues, refer to The Water Quality Appendix, available online at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org).

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## 4. Conclusion

The Commission recognizes that the problems we face on our region's public beaches did not develop overnight. This report is not the first to attempt to address them, but we hope that it will lead to real and sustained progress.

While the Commission recognizes that solving the problems identified in this report will require new resources, it also recognizes that new funds alone won't solve all the problems we face. A comprehensive solution will require increased accountability, personal responsibility, new partnerships, better public management, and time to implement the reforms we propose.

We are confident that the new Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board, working with state and local government, local "Friends" groups and concerned citizens, and the region's nonprofit organizations, will be able to make things better on these beaches in the short and in the longer term.

However, our success depends in large measure on the continued civic engagement of the hundreds of people who took part in this process. Together we can address the problems we face to create beaches we can all be proud of, tapping the full economic, social, and environmental potential of our investments in Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay.



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## List of Appendices

The following documents supplement this report and are available online at [www.savetheharbor.org](http://www.savetheharbor.org). These materials include technical analyses, full documentation of public comments, background information, and case studies.

### **METROPOLITAN BEACHES BUDGET AND OPERATIONS ANALYSIS AND ASSOCIATED TECHNICAL APPENDICES**

prepared by Raphael and Raphael

#### **INFORMATION FROM PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- Public Discussion List of Comments
- Public Discussion Summaries
- Executive Summaries from Public Hearing Minutes
- Supplemental Hearings
  - > Hearing with Agency Officials and Labor Representatives
  - > Youth Focus Group
  - > Boston Harbor Island Beaches and Water Transportation Focus Group

#### **WATER QUALITY**

- Water Quality Analysis and Flagging Accuracy Report
- Nuisance Algae
  - > Nahant Bay and Broad Sound Algae Task Force Q&A brochure
  - > Convey, Donna. "MIT Project Combats Mutant Alga." *Tech Talk*, 11 September 1991

#### **ABOUT THE BEACHFRONT COMMUNITIES**

- Beach Descriptions and History

#### **BEACH COMPARISONS**

- Beach Research Summary (3 pages)
- Beach Research (8 pages)
- Beach Research: Source Documents (174 pages)

#### **MANAGEMENT MODELS AND FRIENDS GROUPS**

- Plan for the Future of Boston Harbor Beaches: Implementation (1993)
- Piers Park Memorandum of Understanding
- Revere Beach Partnership Planning Report (2002)
- Revere Beach Partnership Accomplishments (2006)

#### **RELEVANT PARKS ARTICLES**

- Norton, Michael P. and Kyle Cheney. "Lawmakers sound off, say constituents angry about state parks system." *State House News Service*, 6 December 2006.
- Blanding, Michael. "Green Sweep." *The Boston Globe*, 6 August 2006.