CALL TO ACTION

The Environmental League and the Charles River Watershed Association need Friends Groups' Help!

Please pass on this call for help.

The Commonwealth is about to dispose of seven acres of valuable public parkland along the Charles River to a private party. In 2012, legislation was enacted authorizing, but not requiring, a 20 year lease with a 10 year extension of Daly Field in Brighton to Simmons College. Simmons in turn would allow the local Brighton High School football team and local Little League to use the field, but public access otherwise would be greatly constricted. There is no water dependent use and the Commonwealth would get $0 annual lease payment. This is a travesty.

This case is concerning because of its precedent setting nature. If this deal goes through, what is to stop the state from giving away other pieces of parkland to other private entities in the future?

VIEW the letter from the Environmental League and Charles River Watershed Association in which we urge Governor Baker not to sign the lease. [Copied below.]

Here's who has already signed on. Please help us get to 50 organizations by Friday!

1. Environmental League of Massachusetts
2. Charles River Watershed Association
3. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance
4. Friends of Alewife Reservation
5. Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition
6. Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
7. OARS
8. The Trust for Public Land

To sign your organization onto the letter, please click HERE

Fill out this quick online Google Form by Friday 4/17 at noon. No emails please.
Dear Governor Baker:

We strongly urge your administration not to dispose of seven acres of valuable public parkland along the Charles River in Brighton, MA, known as Daly Field.

In 2012 legislation was enacted which authorizes, but does not direct, the Commonwealth to lease this parkland for 20 + 10 years to a private entity, Simmons College, via a newly created organization called the Allston Brighton Friends of Daly Field (“ABFDF”). Once leased, Simmons College will construct a state of the art college athletic facility for the use of their multiple collegiate teams. They will provide access for the Brighton High School football team and the Allston Brighton Little League, with public access allowed in any remaining time.

While opposing the disposition of this valuable public parkland, we asked two simple questions. What is the value of the land? What is the level of public access?

Under the prior administration, the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) conducted an appraisal of the land. Nowhere in the appraisal can you find a dollar valuation of the land. Instead, the “no net loss” appraisal simply indicates the value to the public of the improved land despite the public’s curtailed use hours is greater than its value in its current, dilapidated condition.

As a result, Simmons College will pay zero for this land! They will make a one-time payment of $500,000 to neighboring Watertown to improve their river-front, but this is analogous to a standard developer’s mitigation fee. The Commonwealth will receive no annual lease payment. This field is not close to the Simmons campus and Simmons’ use is not water dependent. When asked why they do not seek a blighted urban site close to campus, the response was the land was too costly. Apparently if you come to the Commonwealth, you can get parkland for free.

In terms of public access, we share the view of Brighton’s able legislators who believe Brighton athletes deserve a well maintained field. However, despite Simmons’ declaration of substantial general public access, the initial site plan provided zero public parking spaces, on a DCR parkway with no public parking and no public transit. After much negotiation, a mere ten reserved public parking spaces have been included. While Simmons and Brighton High School would be shuttle-bused, how would others access the field? This will truly be Simmons’ field, allowing modest public access.

Governor, you have inherited this problem, it is not of your making. However, it
falls to you to correct this. We urge you not to execute the lease. We are prepared to work with you and Brighton legislators and community leaders to resolve this matter.

This proposed lease to a private party results from the underfunding of DCR and its inability to maintain the field. The citizens of Brighton have amply demonstrated the importance of this field to their community. If DCR reprioritized its capital expenditures to include partial funding for Daly Field, we would work with the Commonwealth to seek additional private funding to complete the project. In the end, the field, which is public trust land, would remain in public hands, with full public access. This is the type of public-private partnership that is in the public interest.

Please do not execute this long-term lease. We stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

George Bachrach, President
Environmental League of MA

And

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

Register to volunteer at a park near you!

April 25, 2015*

Boston Region
Charles River Reservation, Boston
Mystic River Reservation, Somerville
Quincy RiverWalk, Quincy
Savin Hill Beach, Dorchester

Central Region
Leominster State Forest
Nashua River Rail Trail, Groton
Quinsigamond State Park, Worcester
Southern New England Trunkline Trail
Upton State Forest

Southeastern Region
Myles Standish State Forest
Mystic River
Nickerson State Park
Quabbin and Ware River
Robinson State Park
Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey Association, Inc.
Scusset Beach Reservation, Inc.
Shawme-Crowell State Forest
Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT)
Springside Park
Upton State Forest
Wachusetts Mountain
Waquoit Bay Reserve
Western Greenway
Willard Brook
Wompatuck State Park

Put your group on the list.
Contact: friend@networkingfriends.net

Link-In
| Northern Region | Borderland State Park, Easton  
Belle Isle Marsh, Winthrop  
Callahan State Park, Framingham  
Harold Parker State Forest, N. Andover  
Marshview Park, Lynn  
Nahant Beach Reservation  
Maudslay State Park, Newburyport  
Middlesex Fells Reservation, Medford  
Whitehall State Park, Hopkinton  
 | Gateway Park, Hingham  
Blue Hills Reservation, Milton  
Franklin State Forest  
Myles Standish State Forest, Plymouth  
Nickerson State Park & the Cape Cod Rail Trail, Brewster  
Scusset Beach, Bourne  
Shawme-Crowell State Forest, Sandwich  
Webb Memorial State Park, Weymouth  
Western Region  
Chicopee State Park  
D.A.R. State Forest, Goshen  
Norwottuck Rail Trail, Hadley  
Mt. Greylock StateReservation, Lanesboro |

*NOTE: Park Serve Day for Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park, Uxbridge is Sunday, April 26; Salisbury Beach State Reservation is May 3 & 4.

Join Friends group leader Michael Toomey on LinkedIn for discussions relevant to Friends groups: Mass State Forests & Parks Friends Network

Please take a second to like the Friends Network on Facebook and we'll like you too!

Massachusetts Forest and Park Friends Network  
P.O. Box 1199  
Plymouth, Massachusetts 02362  
US