

BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Commemorating the 25th
and 50th Anniversary



WINTER
2022-2023



BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP — LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

“The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership is the keeper of a shared vision, where **“collective action”** is making the difference in how these Islands and urban gateways are thoughtfully developed, how experiences at these special places are offered, and how natural and cultural resources are being preserved for future generations. This anniversary year – 25 years as a national park and 50 years as a state park – the **“Partnership”** that supports Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park, has been recognized for the successes that have been realized, and the inspiration the Harbor Islands provide.

From the very beginning, the Partnership’s history has been one of innovation and experimentation. We test new ideas and act as a catalyst for landscape-scale change. We believe in the power of strong and productive partnerships to leverage resources, play to our strengths, and yield long-term results. NOW, more than ever, is the time to embrace this collaboration and make the Partnership a force for creating opportunities that will help solve the challenges we are confronted with as a coastal city. As we look toward the future, we hope you will join us in making Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park a meaningful place for all people.”

~ Fred Laskey

CHAIR, BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP

BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP

- National Park Service
- United States Coast Guard
- Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
- Massachusetts Port Authority
- City of Boston
- Boston Planning and Development Agency
- Boston Harbor Now
- Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center
- The Trustees of Reservations
- Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council



A MODEL FOR COLLABORATION AND STEWARDSHIP

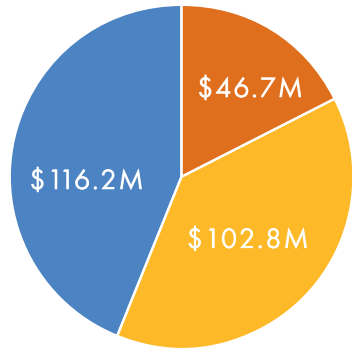
Boston Harbor is well known for the triumphant clean-up of one of America’s dirtiest harbors. And as people began to value the Harbor, they saw opportunities to enhance its impact on our environmental, social and economic health. Managing the Islands for their layers of history, beautiful landscapes and diverse recreational potential became a priority. Visionaries saw the possibility for this collection of 34 islands and peninsulas in and around Boston Harbor to be preserved and protected. They imagined a stewardship model that would establish a coordinated and mutually supportive system for management. In 1996, the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area and the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership were established by Congress. The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership was created to work collaboratively to preserve the lands and waters of the Islands’ historic, cultural, and natural significance, including the millennia of Native American connections to the Islands that continue today, for public use and enjoyment. The Partnership strives to improve public water transportation and access to the Islands and to provide education, visitor information, and programs to increase public understanding of and appreciation for the natural and cultural resources of the Boston Harbor Islands.

Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park



The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership acknowledges the ancestral territory of the Massachusetts Tribe, who have lived on and cared for this land and water for thousands of years and who continue to live here and care for this place today.

PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENTS IN THE PARK 1996 – 2021*



TOTAL INVESTMENT
\$264.7M

- **\$46.7M FEDERAL**
(NPS, USCG)
- **\$102.8M LOCAL COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**
(DCR, MASSPORT, MWRA, CITY OF BOSTON)
- **\$116.2M PRIVATE**
(TIOBEC, TTOR, AND BHN)

*NOTE: 2019 AND 2020 WERE NOT RECORDED

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

The Partnership guided the content of the park’s management plan developed in 2002, which provided a framework for shared management that is still in place today. Although there are many challenges to managing numerous islands for different owners and competing needs, the Partnership continues to provide direction and support to Partnership members and community stakeholders. Most impressive has been the Partnership’s ability to collectively leverage significant investments in the Islands through educational programs, restored lands, preservation of historic properties, enhanced visitor experiences, scientific research, new and upgraded infrastructure improvements, among other achievements.

A total of \$264.7M in spending has been leveraged to implement Partnership projects and programs. The breakdown of federal, state, local and private support includes \$46.7M (federal), \$102.8M (state & local) and \$116.2M (private).

These funds have been used to accomplish many of the initial goals set forth by the Partnership that sought to improve park facilities and historic properties, provide quality visitor experiences and facilitate resource management and science. A few key accomplishments undertaken by Partnership organizations included:

- Constructed Peddocks Island Welcome Center, preserved historic Fort Andrews buildings and restored the Chapel, developed tent and yurt camping sites, and provided new water, sewer and electrical utilities to the island.
- Constructed Georges Island Welcome Center.



- Constructed Boston Harbor Islands Welcome Center on the Greenway.
- Created Hewitts Cove as a Gateway.
- Transformed Spectacle Island into a publicly accessible park.
- Improved public docks, piers and water transportation infrastructure and completed a water transportation study for the park.
- Installed more than 100 boat moorings in Boston Harbor.
- Opened Little Brewster Island to public tours of Boston Light and historic buildings.
- Developed the Vision Plan for Peddocks Island.
- Built a walking trail, wayside exhibits, fishing pier and Irish memorial on Deer Island.
- Undertook historical research and completed historic structure reports, cultural landscape assessments, archeological surveys, and ethnographic studies.
- Serve Boston students and teachers through hands-on teaching and learning developed in partnership with Boston Public Schools.
- Provide community-based and island programming to Boston youth through partnerships with many youth-serving agencies, including Boston’s Boys and Girls Clubs, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, Boston YMCA neighborhood centers, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, Save the Harbor Save the Bay, Camp Harborview, and the New England Aquarium.
- Since 2018, provided 30,000–40,000 people annually with free access to the Islands.
- Serve teens and young adults through an array of youth employment and development programs that provided real-world training in public lands career fields.
- Collectively offer a robust, year-round menu of activities, events, cultural experiences, and recreational opportunities for people of all ages.
- Facilitate resource stewardship and participatory science activities including hundreds of Stewardship Saturday programs.
- Protecting and restoring heritage resources ranging from Thompson Island’s east salt marsh to the multi-island archaeological district and several lighthouses and navigation aids.
- Engage staff scientists, university researchers and students, and hundreds of public volunteers in dozens of studies documenting the park’s remarkable biodiversity and predicting future coastal change, leading to numerous publications.

“Working in partnership allows us to leverage each other’s resources and multiply our impact in ways far greater than any of us could do alone and resulting in a National Park with benefits far greater than the sum of its Islands.”

~Kathy Abbott
PRESIDENT & CEO,
BOSTON HARBOR NOW



“The Anniversary Steering Committee found new ways to share knowledge, resources, and accomplish great things. Forming teams was also an exciting way to get to know one another, learn to work together and appreciate and enjoy the Partnership.”

~ Priscilla Geigis
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION &
RECREATION



MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership reached two milestone anniversaries this year. In commemoration of 25 years as a national park area and 50 years as a state park, the Partnership saw an opportunity to leverage these milestones to enhance and re-energize by actively engaging in collaboration among the partner members and broader community. An Anniversary Steering Committee focused on looking at past accomplishments, with a resolve to address future challenges and opportunities for the Harbor Islands. The committee set forth several goals intended to begin a more engaged process to:

- ▶ Increase awareness and advocacy for Boston Harbor Islands.
- ▶ Define a strategic framework for the next 25 years.
- ▶ Enhance community engagement with all aspects of the park.

The anniversary committee structured its work around communications and marketing, programming, and engagement. Integrated teamwork over this anniversary year led to impressive results. A few examples include:

Communications & Marketing

- The Partnership launched “Find Your Better Nature,” a community outreach campaign that featured creative collateral and messaging, targeted throughout the Boston region, with special attention to neighborhoods that have not traditionally associated with the Islands. The campaign included a video, billboards, public service announcements, public events, and press outreach.
- Using the Harbor Islands branded colors, a citywide landmark lighting took place around the city to raise awareness of the Islands season opening.
- The Boston Red Sox hosted the Partnership with a special night at Fenway Park.

Programming & Engagement

- On opening day of the Harbor Islands season, thousands of people lined up for free ferries to Spectacle and Georges Island, while families enjoyed live music, partner-facilitated activities, and interactive entertainment along the Harborwalk. Partnership members and elected officials welcomed the crowds of visitors.
- Partners collaborated to define seven engagement tracks, including Music in the Park, Health and Wellness, History & Recreation, and On the Water to give shape to a robust menu of signature anniversary programs and events.
- More than 180 programs, including 25 signature programs and events, were offered throughout the anniversary season.
- Seven free Community Cruises featuring food and live music, engaged more than 3,000 people from community networks and neighborhoods across the city (i.e., East Boston, Charlestown, Roxbury, South Boston) in an evening out on the water getting to know the Harbor and Islands – their relevance, vitality, and promise.
- Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland came to Boston to kick off the Anniversary Year and recognize the importance of the Partnership as an effective collaboration.
- Twelve community groups received mini grants to design, plan, promote, and facilitate island-based experiences to meet the unique needs and interests of people in their communities. More than 2,400 people, many first-time Island visitors, participated in these community-curated programs, and the grant program was structured to support the formation of strong and enduring relationships among park partners, community organizations, and the people they serve.

This committee’s work greatly improved the visibility of the Islands and provided inspirational experiences to first time visitors. The success of working together is evident in new communications that support collaboration, improved relationships among partners, and new audiences engaged throughout the anniversary year.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

Twenty years ago, a plan for the Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area and Partnership laid out goals and policies that supported the legislation establishing this new and unique type of park. The Partnership will build on this legacy and usher in a renewed era of re-imagining a dynamic waterfront and an island system that responds to community needs, attracts visitors from around the corner and around the world, improves ecological systems, preserves history, and responds to the urgency of a changing climate.

Throughout this anniversary year, Partnership meetings focused on “Looking Back,” “Looking Inward” and “Envisioning the Future.” These facilitated conversations among Partnership members and the public recognized the need for visionary leadership, one that brings partners together and encourages diverse viewpoints, is needed to take on society’s biggest challenges. Together, the collective impact of the members of the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership and our networks can help guide our park and our region.



Our focus will be on:

- ▶ **Keeping Eyes on the Prize** – bold and innovative ways of thinking about the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park for the next 25 years supporting vital public purposes, venues for learning and civic dialogue, as well as for outdoor recreation and respite.
- ▶ **Leveraging** the Partnership organizations and coastal landscape as a learning lab for developing climate resiliency solutions for Boston Harbor and beyond.
- ▶ **Intentionally supporting** an equitable and inclusive Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park that is affordable, welcoming, and inspiring to all people.
- ▶ **Modeling “collective impact”** – an intentional way of working together and sharing information for the purpose of solving complex problems and accomplishing common goals



ADVANCING THE PARTNERSHIP AGENDA

Confronting Climate Change Through Collaboration and Innovation

The Islands provide a unique opportunity to engage scientists and everyday people in hands-on learning of climate change impacts and researching innovative solutions for ongoing management of resources and infrastructure on the Islands and mainland. Examples include:

- Leverage the Harbor and Islands as a learning laboratory. Stone Living Lab Partnership was established to bring research from the Lab to coastal environments by creating a user-centered, open, innovative ecosystem that engages scientists and the community in pursuit of nature-based solutions to climate resilience in and around Boston Harbor. Park partners will work with the Lab and continue to serve as leaders in participatory science.
- Engage with Climate Ready Boston, Resilient MA, and the work underway by universities and non-profit organizations to advance planning and resource management of inevitable changes, including infrastructure adaptations, documentation, and resiliency modeling.
- Expand the current young adult program, Historic Preservation Corps, a partnership among National Park Service, Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation, and Student Conservation Corps that would launch a park Climate Corps: a program to provide young adults job training in the green sector and hands-on learning in climate change adaptation, mitigation, and education across disciplines including historic preservation, landscape maintenance, and resource stewardship and science, while addressing urgent climate change and environmental justice needs.
- Support planning for the Harborwalk and Gateways to accommodate both a recreational pathway and resiliency.

Making Personal Connections to Nature and History

Carved and sculpted by massive glaciers from millennia past, these constellations of Islands have played an enormous role in the history and growth of the region. Despite centuries of development and an astonishing range of uses – lighthouse stations, military fortifications, Native American internment, farmsteads, hospitals, landfills, etc., the Harbor Islands have undergone innumerable transformations. The Harbor and Islands are a sacred space to the Massachusetts Tribe, which has been in relationship with the Islands for 12,000 years. The Islands are noted as North America’s only field of glacially derived drumlins surrounded by water and provide a mosaic of important natural habitats for animals and plants. They also offer incredible opportunities for teaching, experiential learning, and outdoor adventure. Examples include:

- Develop and nurture lifelong connections between people and the park – especially young people – through a continuum of engaging educational, volunteer service, and work experiences.
- Expand educational experiences for teachers and students that connect classroom teaching with experiential hands-on learning, increasing connections to educators, school districts, and camps.
- Support the expansion of the Thompson Island Education Center’s “Connections” program to reach 20% of Boston Middle School students that help develop and set standards in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and social-emotional learning.
- Promote greater understanding of the history of Native American use and involvement of the





Islands, protect burial grounds, and work with Massachusetts and other Tribal Nations to design a memorial on Deer Island for the people lost in King Phillips War.

- Support an art-in-the-park strategy that will foster authentic, collaborative, and respectful partnerships that enliven learning and visitor experiences, using the Harbor Islands as a resource, inspiration, and platform for creative programming.
- Learning from the Anniversary “mini-grant” pilot program, continue partnering and co-creating programs with community organizations that encourage more diverse people to learn about and connect with the Boston Harbor Islands.
- Leverage existing and new partners in the development of programs that will attract and engage new audiences in meaningful experiences.

Answering the Call to Welcome All People and Provide Equitable Access

It’s not enough to welcome non-traditional park visitors – recent immigrants, non-English speakers, people of color – the park must find ways to invite everyone in. Outreach must be expressed in multiple languages and take advantage of multiple technologies, formats, venues, and values. Developing a deep, lasting, and effective commitment to diversity and inclusion requires patience, determination, financial support, and time. Examples include:

- Support the Harbor Islands “Find Your Better Nature” campaign that encourages people to explore Boston’s waterfront and Islands through organizing and hosting hundreds of free or low-cost, recreational, cultural, and social events.
- Advance bold and innovative waterfront visions that support the needs and accessibility of diverse communities while providing solutions to climate change – endorse emerging projects such as the development of Piers Park II and III in East Boston and Moakley Park in South Boston.

- Engage public and private entities in crafting a sustainable economic model for public ferries to be both economically viable and affordable for all people.
- Integrate public transportation as part of a multi-language wayfinding system that allows people to get to the “Gateway” sites along the mainland and out to the Islands.
- Ensure ADA accessibility at Gateways, Islands, ferries, and on park websites and other digital media.

Landscape Scale Conservation

The Partnership was constructed to bring people and organizations together – across political, cultural, institutional, and geographical boundaries – to craft and achieve common goals. Congress recognized that a landscape scale approach provided an opportunity to think and act collaboratively and directed the Partnership to work toward conservation and public engagement for the whole Island system. A major accomplishment of the first 25 years of the park is that the Partnership has maintained this whole-park landscape viewpoint, even as individual landowners retain the rights and responsibilities for managing their properties. The Partnership will continue to align resources and harness the “collective impact” that is shaping a positive future for the Boston Harbor Islands within the greater Boston Harbor landscape. Examples include:

- Support for Harbor wide planning efforts that identify landscape conservation needs as well as showcase the connectivity of the Islands’ histories, ecosystems, and landscapes.
- Support the Boston Harbor Archaeology Climate Action Plan, funded through the City of Boston’s Community Preservation Act, that is developing a response to the ongoing loss of Massachusetts ancestral sites and other historic sites on the Islands due to erosion and climate change.
- Continued collaborations among park partner staff with local and regional networks such as the

Boston Biodiversity Consortium, the Boston Harbor Ecosystem Network, and Northeast Coastal Waterbird Cooperators to identify and enact biodiversity and ecosystem conservation actions.

- Leveraging partner expertise and assets to address climate change response within the context of regional partnerships such as the Stone Living Lab and using the park as a platform for research and public engagement around nature-based solutions to coastal storm impacts and coastal resilience planning.
- Encouraging the use of the University of Massachusetts, Boston Healey Library Archives and Special Collections as the repository for Boston Harbor Islands’ archives, manuscripts, maps, research materials, digital recordings, and other holdings. Permanent state records will continue to be housed at the Massachusetts State Archives.

Developing Island Destinations

Just minutes from downtown Boston is an island landscape like no other in the nation. The Boston Harbor clean-up, along with the establishment of the state and national park, and waterfront and Island investments have created opportunities for millions of people living in urban environments to have diverse experiences in these public spaces. However, there is more to be done. Examples include:

- Develop a systems approach that identifies deferred maintenance and capital investment needs that can be utilized for strategic planning and raising funds to address critical resource needs.
- Embrace the Peddocks Island Vision Plan as a model for other Islands to preserve historic structures and landscapes and further develop infrastructure that aligns with the islands’ dynamic changing climate to provide outdoor experiences, active and passive recreation opportunities, community events, overnight accommodations, and hands-on education.
- Develop a community engaged Visitor Experience Plan that would identify opportunities for each Island to provide unique and memorable experiences. Recommendations for curating

experiences and strategic interventions may include adaptive reuse of historic buildings and landscapes, outdoor recreation (trails, camping, photography, etc.), creative placemaking through arts, festivals, music, etc., new amenities, and coordinated ferry and programming scheduling.

Boston’s “Working” Harbor

The Harbor, New England’s largest port, is one of the top contributors to our local economy. Traditional maritime jobs persist on the changing waterfront—cleaned up over the past four decades – lined with significant new construction and braced for the impacts of climate change shipping and a growing cruise ship industry are critical to our future. Today, the Port supports over 66,000 jobs and \$8.2 billion in revenue.

Tourism continues to be another of the Commonwealth’s leading economic contributors. Boston is a National Park City and as such attracts millions of visitors to the waterfront as well as the Harbor Islands. The Partnership is committed to helping everyone understand that our Harbor is as important to our sense of place as Fenway Park and the Freedom Trail. Our clean harbor and 50 square miles of protected blue and green public open space that is Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park and beyond contribute to Boston’s competitiveness as a place to live and work as well as visit. Today the Boston Harbor Islands and the Partnership have contributed numerous jobs to the Boston Green New Deal.

Finally, COVID-19 has reinforced the value of our public parks as public health resources. Scientific studies continue to quantify the cost savings from the health benefits of spending time in parks and particularly parks on the water. There are hundreds of miles of shoreline and thousands of acres of park land that contribute to the emotional, psychological and physical benefits of parks for people of all ages. For example, Long Island has long been a place of healing and renewal and could continue as a natural space to foster health and wellness for generations to come.



Shaping Strategic Alliances

The Partnership used the anniversary year to reflect on its past work as well as explore different ways of collaborating among the different organizations. Discussions throughout the year allowed the Partners to deliberate on ways to effectively carry out its legislated mission. There is a renewed commitment to raising awareness of the Boston Harbor Islands and forming a strategic alignment around common goals. Success is dependent on engaging community members, improving communication, setting shared objectives and priorities, and pooling resources. Examples include:

- Explore the need and opportunity to engage a Partnership coordinator that could facilitate Partnership meetings and committee work that supports a collective impact model. The position would coordinate Partnership engagement in setting goals, share work, collaboration, fund activities, and exponentially increase outreach and stewardship.
- Reimagine the role and membership of the Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council and focus on how the Council would actively engage and represent the broader community at the Partnership level.
- Ensure the Partnership and Partner organizations and staff foster productive relations with Indigenous peoples in the region. Provide opportunities for the Partnership members to develop a deeper understanding of the historical

and contemporary context of Native Americans and the Harbor Islands, in order to share their connections and stories with the public.

- Maximize existing Partner staff – one of the Partnership’s greatest assets is its size and diversity. Collectively, the eleven organizations make up a network of dynamic, highly engaged, and extremely experienced staff involved with interagency field operations that provide greater opportunities for collective impact.
- Engage with the local communities to better understand the factors that constrain visitation (lack of experience, language, market competition, lack of amenities, price sensitivity). Evaluate visitors and non-visitors in a more nuanced way using factors and questions to identify strengths and challenges in attracting new audiences to the Islands.
- Intentionally integrate an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) lens into all aspects of Partnership’s work



Find Your Better Nature...

We hope that this anniversary year inspires you to see yourself in this dynamic Partnership as we look toward fulfilling the promise that came with the creation of the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park. For ways to learn more, engage more and contribute more, please go to WWW.BOSTONHARBORISLANDS.ORG/BOSTON-HARBOR-ISLANDS-ANNIVERSARY

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