

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
March 15, 2016, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

Attendees: Giles Parker—National Park Service (NPS); Marc Knowlton—United States Coast Guard (USCG); Susan Kane, Samantha Overton—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Andrew G. Hargens—Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport); Frederick Laskey and Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); Christopher Cook—City of Boston (City); Chris Busch—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); James F. Scully—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); Rebecca Smerling—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Charles R. Norris, Rob Moir and Heather Deschenes—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council (AC).

Jim Scully, acting vice-chair, opened the meeting. **The minutes of the previous meeting on January 19, 2016, were approved.**

Partner Updates and 2016 Season

United States Coast Guard (USCG)

Marc Knowlton provided updates for USCG, including working with NPS on having an architect and structural engineer assess the floor of the boathouse. He said that things are continuing to move forward on Boston Light's 300th anniversary, including securing the Coast Guard Band. Marc then described the effort by the Army Corps of Engineers to recover the diesel spilled by tug vessel Emily Anne, which sank north of the north shipping channel, and fielded a question from Rob Moir about the depth of the wreck, which is 35 feet at low tide.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Samantha Overton acknowledged Susan Kane's tenth anniversary and the tenth year of Spectacle. There are boats on Spectacle and Grape that need removal, and they are currently addressing issues of staffing and winter damage in need of repair. She vouched for Commissioner Roy as great to work with, encouraging Partners to meet with him as he has returned from his second knee surgery. Susan commented on the status of improvements to the yurt sites on Peddocks Island, noting that volunteers from the New England Carpenters Union built six yurt platforms that will be brought to the island to be assembled next week. All current yurts have been fully booked for the summer. The Carpenters Union will investigate issues with existing yurts, such as windows not opening, and possibly installing porch areas.

Susan continued with news that their program to host teenagers from the Student Conservation Association (SCA) has been funded. The youth crew will spend 21 days in July on a service learning project, a collaboration between DCR, BHIA, and NPS. In June, there will be college-age group from SCA on the island for 10 days to work on construction projects. Wentworth Architectural Design and Build Program gave four

proposals for Peddocks Island, including one for an outdoor hearth between the new yurts and the group site. DCR will choose one, and BHIA will purchase supplies, with an opportunity to build longer-term relationships.

A full assessment of Fort Warren on Georges Island is underway, with a report documenting ways to better protect the fort expected before the end of June. Marianne asked who is in charge of the assessment, which Susan answered that it is GZA, who has done the same for four other forts in the past, but Georges is the biggest. The fence on Front One of the fort has been fixed, which faces Boston Light near the Disappearing Guns. Later in the spring, Fronts Two and Three will be given fences to replace the older chain link fences, which will be removed. Air Berlin will be doing a cover story on the Islands.

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)

Fred Laskey described an incident in which five employees were hurt in a dust explosion in the motor control part of the building on Nut Island, which caused a fiberglass container to catch fire. It was in an underground room, which made it difficult for firefighters to access. Public access remains open, with closures only in small areas.

Giles Parker informed the Partners of a group of ham radio operators who are attempting to broadcasting from all of the parks in celebration of the Centennial. They are looking at either Deer or Nut Island.

See link for more: <http://www.arri.org/news/arri-national-parks-on-the-air-event-to-mark-national-park-service-centennial>

City of Boston

Chris Cook said the city does not expect any budget cuts to Spectacle Island for Fiscal Year 2017, but there could be an administrative change as responsibility is transferred to Boston Parks.

Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

Chris Busch provided information on several ongoing projects, including a parking garage at the Harbor and an expansion to the Marriott in the Seaport District of South Boston, and a master plan for the Marine Industrial Park. In the public realm, the East Boston Greenway will connect Constitution Beach and Piers Park, and a request for proposal (RFP) is coming for lighting on the Congress Street Bridge. Lastly, another RFP is going out for a new ferry dock at Lovejoy and two new interisland ferries. Plans are expected before the end of the year, but they do not know the long-term schedule.

Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA)

Rebecca Smirling, sitting in for Phil, explained that they would be moving forward with island business as usual during their merger with The Boston Harbor Association (TBHA). There will be three free ferry days, including sometime in July and Founder's Day, with an estimated 12 to 13,000 people participating. The website has been updated to say "National and State Park." They are working with the city on new

banners on Long Wharf, and 60,000 copies of the park newspaper are due in May. After already doing more free trips in 2016 than for all of 2015, BHIA is working with BHC to double the number of free access trips for nonprofits. They are giving free passes to every library, hoping to see an increase in the use of these passes. There are still some tickets left for the anniversary event on August 21st, a celebration of Edward Rowe Snow and Boston Light. Marianne asked how the nonprofit pass system works. Rebecca answered that there is a maximum of 100 per organization, with Susan adding that they have improved the way the system works with DCR permits.

National Park Service (NPS)

Giles Parker reported that seasonal hiring is almost finished. There will be two Centennial Volunteers, including the current CVA, Kristina Bergquist. NPS is working with an April Vacation camp ahead of Junior Ranger Day, as well as with Green Ambassadors. Stewardship Saturdays are continuing.

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC)

Jim Scully said that there is ongoing infrastructure work on Thompson Island, with a great deal of construction of primarily dormitories. They are due to officially open on April 1st, and seasonal staff begins in two weeks. Enrollment for summer and fall are both strong. Giles asked whether the 4th of July outing is tied to Harbor Fest. Suzanne inquired about the Trail Run, which Jim answered will be two days: September 21st and 22nd. They are partnering with BHC, and enrollment is strong. They are recruiting high school students as Green Ambassadors for work in July and August, as well as summer school for rising sixth graders.

Advisory Council

Heather Deschenes, the newly appointed vice chair, said that the annual meeting was held on March 9th, with speakers – including archaeologist Joe Bagley, photo historian Elizabeth Carella, and Dan Bird – on the subject of the islands as a place of refuge and isolation. Charlie Norris said it was decided at the annual meeting that Elizabeth would serve as chair, Kelly as Vice, and Heather as alternate. Many have aged out of the program, so they are looking for new members. The next meeting is Wednesday, June 6th.

Public Comment and Questions

Suzanne Gall Marsh from Friends of Boston Harbor Islands asked if there had been movement on DCR's Resource Management Plan (RMP). Samantha Overton replied that there had been a good meeting with the City of Boston, and are looking at the broader harbor, not just the state park, and that there had been a good charrette focused on Spectacle Island. They are looking for good ways to get community input into the RMP, with a draft release anticipated this spring. Samantha asked for a one page brief on how that connection will be happening so they can brief their new commissioner. Chris said sure, and most of the construction is done. She offered to help with orientation signage and more. Suzanne asked for an update on the Marriott expansion plan. They are looking to expand pavilions on the east, north, and south side of the property.

Highlighting Successes and Opportunities

Heather Deschenes gave a slideshow presentation on action taken by the New England Aquarium Youth Development Program (YDP) on climate change, which aims "to empower youth to understand their connections to the ocean and participate as members of a community of informed citizens who are inspired to change the world." The slideshow was titled "Mission Impact – 'Protect the Blue Planet,'" which summarized the following areas in youth engagement:

- Solutions – Implement solutions to ocean problems (policies, practices, programs)
- New knowledge – Generate new knowledge for solutions (applied research, innovations)
- Stewardship – Promote stewardship (stewardship ethic, conservation behavior)
- Engagement – Increase engagement with the mission (participation, awareness, education)
- Voice – Leverage our institutional profile and credibility to be a stronger voice for the oceans

Areas of focus include Global Change, School & Community, Youth Development, and Volunteers & Internship Programs. The YDP served nearly 600 youth in 2015, including 83 individual teen internships (both paid and unpaid), 284 Harbor Discoveries campers, 42 participants in Marine Biologists in Training (one day a week for six weeks), 142 unique individual participants as Live Blue Ambassadors at least once (465 overall), and 44 ClimaTeens. Challenges and future directions include:

- Increase the number of field-based conservation activities we facilitate
- Build more explicit leadership development training into our Youth Programs
- Facilitate additional mentoring opportunities

NEAQ offers a scalable model for citizen engagement on the Boston Harbor Islands, including hands-on stewardship and citizen monitoring. Heather answered a question from Mark about the shift to "open oceans," saying that they are focused on citizen engagement and are not looking to be a competitive research institution for the Boston Harbor. They feel that it is best to leave room for other organizations in the Harbor while continuing to grow their current research fields, but may turn to the Harbor in the future.

Harbor Dredging – Reuse Planning

Kathryn Ford from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries gave a presentation titled "Boston Harbor Beneficial Reuse & Artificial Reef Project," funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It was divided into two sections, the first being "What We're Doing," with a question of "can rock from the Boston Harbor Navigational Improvement Project be used to build an artificial reef that protects the shoreline and provides biological value?"

- Beginning in 2017, the Army Corps of Engineers will spend two years dredging the navigation channel in Boston Harbor, digging up an estimated 250,000 cubic yards of rock. The rock will be disposed of at the Mass Bay Disposal Site, 20 miles from Boston Harbor.

- The Nature Conservancy brought interested parties together in 2013 to discuss how this rock could potentially be used to protect the shoreline. With a planning grant from Hurricane Sandy relief funds, a multi-stakeholder process was initiated to explore this concept in detail.
- The project includes site selection and the creation of conceptual reef designs at two sites using both dredge material and non-dredge material.
- This project presents an opportunity to advance the conversation about coastal protection in the face of rising sea levels and failing infrastructure.

The next section was "How We're Doing It." A workgroup consisting of 45 regulators and environmental practitioners has met two to three times per year since October 2014 to guide the project and identify best practices and regulatory hurdles. A point-and-click geodatabase has been assembled from existing data layers to identify human and natural resources at potential sites. An expert steering committee selected ten sites and determined which can accept dredge material (Long, Gallops, Spectacle, Georges) and which cannot (the remaining six). A field team has visited these sites to assess on-the-ground conditions, and two sites for reef design will be selected by March 28th, 2016. Northeastern University will study sediment, biology, and wave climate at the two sites in summer 2016. Wave climate will be assessed for a year. Six conceptual reef designs (three at each site) will be created by fall 2016. At least one design will utilize poorly sorted dredge material.

The presentation ended with a request for assistance: Are there known obstacles to this type of infrastructure at the sites? Which sites are best suited for this type of project? The reverse side of the handout includes two maps titled "Dredging Plan" and "Potential Reef Sites." Kathryn fielded a question from the Hull Lifesaving Museum answered a question regarding the purpose of the reef, saying that they are creating designs for breakwaters that would benefit the shoreline in average conditions to benefit the shore in cases of extreme weather. Susan Kane reminded that once designed, this project needs to be permitted, and that Georges would benefit most and Spectacle the least due to sand movement patterns. Kathryn believes this project would help mitigate this.

Jim Scully asked for examples of this being done on the East Coast, which Kathryn answered that there are some reef-like structures South that protect marshes, and that it may help the growth of eelgrass. Susan asked how the material would be stabilized, which is still being determined. Jon Kachmar said that TNC is a great proponent of this work, and that there is new ground to cover in terms of permitting, but Massport needs to take a more helpful role as the project sponsor. Fred cited the abundance of reef-type sea floor, and asked if this makes it more affordable for the Corps to do dredging, to which the answer was yes, it does.

Boston Harbor Islands Center at UMass Boston

A handout was distributed titled "Boston Harbor Island Center: A collaborative fostering research, education, and stewardship in the Boston Harbor and Islands." Robyn gave a presentation detailing the structure, purpose, and goals of the organization. On January

22, 2016, the planning committee convened 35 stakeholders, including seven BHI partnership member organizations, seven university partners, and five nonprofit organizations, to discuss how to, collectively and collaboratively, facilitate research, education, park management, and community stewardship.

The presentation detailed the charrette structure and vision, and how the idea has evolved for five years as an effort to formalize and catalyze opportunity through a variety of means. Among their goals is leveraging BHI as a globally unique research and education asset, and they aim to facilitate that perspective. They envision a hands-on, place-based teaching and learning that integrates science with arts and history. They view disruptive innovation not as a tactic, but a mindset, and believes to be successful, they must innovate a new model for multi-sectoral collaboration. Over the next six months, they hope to establish a representative steering committee that will identify management and operational structure of the center while maintaining open dialog with stakeholders.

Marianne asked about the scope of the work, if it is limited to the islands, noting that it is easier to access a land-based center. Robyn answered that the planning grant will explore this question. Fred Laskey noted the experience and talent of UMass in helping inform the clean-up, and thanked Robyn for the work she has put in

Other Business

There was no other business. The meeting was adjourned by Jim Scully.