

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charles River Swimming Day Cancelled

The Charles River Conservancy and Charles River Swimming Club are disappointed to announce the cancellation of the Eleventh One Mile Swim and 2019 City Splash, originally scheduled for Saturday, June 15th and later rescheduled for Saturday June 22nd.

Boston, MA – Friday, June 21st, 2019 – The Charles River Conservancy (CRC) and Charles River Swimming Club (CRSC) regrettably announce the cancellation of the *Charles River Swimming Day* due to heavy rainfall two weeks in a row. Swimming in the Charles is only allowed with the issuance of a Special Event Permit from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Regulations from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority dictate that rainfall must stay under ½” of accumulation in the 48 hours leading up to a swim in the Charles because of its potential impact to water quality, and therefore the permits will not be issued.

“We are so disappointed that we have to cancel City Splash this year, especially since it was going to be the best yet with free, family-friendly dry-land activities,” said **CRC Executive Director Laura Jasinski**, “but we want to err on the side of caution when it comes to reintroducing swimming to the Charles.”

While tomorrow’s postponement is not based on the EPA’s recent announcement that the Charles River’s grade dropped from an A- in 2017 to B in 2018, both are related to rainfall.

“When it comes to the Charles, a lot depends on the weather,” said **Charles River Watershed Association Executive Director, Emily Norton**, “We had a lot of wet weather in 2018 and it’s been pretty soggy in 2019 as well. We think the CRC and CRSC made the right decision for their events, but I’m disappointed I won’t be able to show off my cannonball!”

Unfortunately, the One-Mile Swim and City Splash cannot be rescheduled for later this summer. Preparations for 4th of July celebrations on the Esplanade preclude other events from taking place for the next several weeks and the likelihood of cyanobacteria blooms, which can produce a harmful toxin, increase as water temperatures rise.

However, it’s not all bad news. A “B” grade does still mean that the Charles is sometimes safe for swimming, and the CRC is working to increase opportunities to swim.

“The first step is better understanding water quality conditions in specific locations in the Charles, because it varies,” said **Jasinski**.

For the past two summers, the nonprofit has been working with **Max Rome, PhD Candidate in Environmental Engineering at Northeastern University**, to take daily samples at North Point Park, the best location identified for a swim park, according the [CRC’s 2016 feasibility study](#). While the full results of his research have yet to be published, an executive summary can be

found on the CRC's website. During the study period. Rome's research shows that swimming at North Point Park met swimming standards most of the summer. This study also highlights the challenge of harmful algal blooms, which has led to another project with the CRC to improve water quality: the installation of a floating wetland.

"Overall, the news is good," said **Rome**. "With respect to E. coli, North Point Park is a very clean site. Algal blooms are a real problem throughout the lower basin, but our study shows some promising and easy ways to know when blooms are starting and provide a timely warning."

The ~700 square foot floating wetland, to be installed by Spring of 2020 at North Point Park, will provide a platform to study the algal blooms and see how the river food chain might become more resistant to rapid algal growth.

"Part of the river's challenge is that we have created a completely novel ecosystem here," explained **Rome**. "What used to be a tidal estuary is now more like a broad, nutrient-rich shallow lake where summer water temperatures reach over 80 degrees and wetland vegetation has been replaced by rip rap and seawalls—a perfect environment for algae. Habitat plays a key role in shaping ecosystem structure, and we plan to study how adding submerged vegetation can help support the growth of herbivorous zooplankton and shift the system away from cycles of rapid algal growth."

With help from **Pennie Taylor**, an art, science and museum educator, the CRC will use the floating wetland and Rome's research as a way to teach the public about the complexities of the Charles River. Together, the team is already working on (and testing) fun, family-friendly activities, like an "ecological tag" game and a card game to demonstrate habitat and food chain concepts. They will also be planning a community planting day to populate the wetland with native plants.

"Like City Splash, the floating wetland will offer a unique opportunity for people to engage with the river, which in turn inspires continued advocacy for the Charles' health," said **Jasinski**. "In a way, not being able to swim in the Charles tomorrow is a great reminder of *why* we hold City Splash in the first place: to raise awareness of the important role the river plays in our city. We should all be disappointed that we can't swim tomorrow. We should also all be disappointed that we can't swim every day in the summer. And the CRC is working to change that."

More information on the floating wetland can be found at www.thecharles.org and charlesfloatingwetland.com.

About the Charles River Conservancy

The Charles River Conservancy (CRC), founded in 2000, is a non-profit dedicated to the stewardship, renewal, and enhancement of the urban parklands along the Charles River, from Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam. One of the CRC's goals is to create a seasonal swim park at North Point Park that will allow the public to enjoy river swimming once again.



For more information about the CRC, please visit TheCharles.org or call 617-608-1410. Follow the CRC on Twitter [@CharlesRiverCRC](https://twitter.com/CharlesRiverCRC), Instagram [@CharlesRiverCRC](https://www.instagram.com/CharlesRiverCRC) or Facebook [Facebook.com/CharlesRiverConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/CharlesRiverConservancy)

About the Charles River Swimming Club

The Charles River Swimming Club, Inc. is an all-volunteer organization founded in 2005 with the dual purpose of organizing competitive swimming events in the Charles River and facilitating the return of public river swimming.

For more information about the CRSC, please visit charlesriverswimmingclub.org or email raceinfo@charlesriverswimmingclub.org

About the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is steward of one of the largest state parks systems in the country. Its 450,000 acres is made up of forests, parks, greenways, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds. DCR protects, promotes, and enhances the state's natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

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