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Commissioner Nicole LaChapelle
Department of Conservation and Recreation
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Head of the Charles Regatta Strategic Plan

August 13, 2025

Dear Commissioner LaChapelle and the Head of the Charles Regatta Strategic Plan team,

On behalf of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC), thank you for protecting the Charles River parklands and your continued dedication to public engagement regarding the Head of the Charles Regatta (HOCR) Strategic Plan. We deeply appreciate DCR's efforts to make major public events on the river both successful and sustainable, and we recognize the complex challenges involved.

As stewards of the urban Charles River parks, we are compelled to raise the urgent need for stronger protections and preventative measures. While this comment letter pertains to the HOCR Strategic Plan, we believe the same "park health first" standard should apply to any major event affecting the Charles River parks. Proactive stewardship must be the guiding principle for all public uses that risk lasting harm to these vital urban green spaces.

Each October, the Regatta brings immense positive energy and community to the riverfront. The event's operation also risks significant damage to vulnerable elements of the park, leaving lasting ecological effects long after the races are over. That means for the remaining 362 days of the year, residents of the Allston/Brighton neighborhood and visitors to Herter Park suffer the lingering aftermath (ponded turf, stressed trees, habitat loss, etc).

Current mitigation falls short. The combined effects of vehicle load-ins, heavy equipment, and thousands of spectators year after year result in significant soil compaction and tree damage (especially on critical root zones).

With this in mind, we call on DCR and HOCR organizers to prioritize protection and mitigation (in that order). We respectfully request:

Proactive strategies and infrastructure to prevent future damage.

- Invest in and implement structural lawn systems or subgrade supports to minimize compaction
- Ensure robust and science-based tree and root protection measures are installed, developed in consultation with arborists
- Consider staging, parking, and loading protocols utilizing hardscape (such as Soldiers Field Road) instead of permitting direct vehicle access to turf and root areas

While a detailed plan has been developed regarding different zones in Herter Park, similar protocols should be developed for other affected parklands, especially Magazine Beach Park and Riverbend Park, which are consistently stressed by the HOCR.

A clear plan for funding and executing parkland restoration.

- Allocate dedicated mitigation funding to implement preventative solutions and to ensure timely and effective restoration of impacted park areas

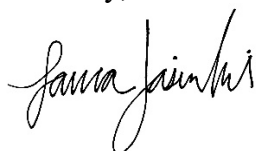
Public updates from DCR and HOCR regarding risk mitigation and restoration.

- Improve stakeholder engagement by actively involving key community representatives both in the year-round planning process and in annual coordination for the event itself.
- Relay consistent updates to the conservation departments in the City of Boston and the City of Cambridge
- Communicate risk mitigation and restoration commitments from project team
- Report on impacts and progress

With each year's regatta, compaction and stress accrue; the park's recovery time grows longer, and the loss is increasingly permanent. The value Herter Park provides—recreation, shade, all the benefits of public green and blue spaces in the city—depends on its living systems.

The Charles River Conservancy is eager to partner with DCR, HOCR, and the public on solutions that enable both celebration and stewardship. We cannot wait any longer to invest in measures and infrastructure that match the scale and significance of this event, securing the long-term health of Herter Park (and the Regatta's splendor) for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,



Laura Jasinski
Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy
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