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The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chair
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
Joint Ways & Means Committee, State House
Via: Michael.Rodrigues@masenate.gov, Aaron.M.Michlewitz@mahouse.gov

Re: Comments on Environmental Funding in FY27 Budget

March 17, 2026

Dear Chair Rodrigues, Chair Michlewitz, and Committee members,

On behalf of the Charles River Conservancy, I write to respectfully urge your support for restoring and increasing funding for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), and—most urgently—the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in the [Governor's FY27 budget](#).

As a longtime nonprofit partner and “friends group” to the Department of Conservation and Recreation for over 25 years, the Charles River Conservancy is committed to make the Lower Charles River and its parks more vibrant, healthy, and welcoming now and in the future. We see firsthand the dedication of DCR’s staff and their commitment to providing safe, vibrant, and well-maintained public spaces for millions of visitors each year. We deeply believe in their mission and know they deserve the resources to deliver diverse programming, high-quality facilities, and constituent engagement.

If you may recall, the [DCR Special Commission report](#) (December 2021) stated: “Relative to its population, income, and total government spending, Massachusetts’ local and state investments in parks and recreation are at or near the bottom of all states and are generally around half the national averages.” For a state that prides itself on leading in education, healthcare, and innovation, this ranking is unacceptable and inconsistent with Massachusetts’ values. DCR has been chronically underfunded, and it is time to correct that imbalance.

Additionally, the benefits of funding our state parks are vast. The Special Commission also notes, “The Commonwealth receives returns on its investment in conservation and recreation through visitation, ecosystem services, climate change adaptation and mitigation, improved health, workforce attraction, and higher property values. The findings suggests that these returns exceed direct costs to the public purse, likely by many multiples, and are important to the Commonwealth’s competitiveness.” According to a [recent study by the Trust for Public Land](#), every \$1 invested in land conservation in Massachusetts returned \$4 in ecosystem services. Increasing DCR funding is a clear return on investment.

To maintain this critical work and avoid setbacks in staffing, maintenance, and community access, we join the Green Budget Coalition, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, and Mass Parks for All in respectfully requesting the following FY27 appropriations:

- **DEP** (account 2200-0100): **\$55,341,535** (\$1,611,889 increase over FY26)
- **DER** (account 2300-0101): **\$5,506,476** (\$162,953 increase, level funding with FY25)
- **DCR Operations** (account 2810-0100): **\$117,803,751** (3.5% increase over FY26)
- **DCR Seasonal Employees** (account 2800-0501): **\$30,322,147** (3.5% increase over FY26)

These modest increases reflect inflation and ensure that essential environmental work and public services can continue without disruption. DCR's parks, including the Charles River Reservation, are vital public assets that provide real economic, environmental, and social benefits to our Commonwealth.

Thank you for your continued leadership and for recognizing that a healthy, well-funded environment benefits every Massachusetts resident.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jasinski". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Laura Jasinski
Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy
Environmental Seat, DCR Stewardship Council
Former DCR Special Commission Member