
[CRAB] DCR Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan

1 message

Carl Zimba <zimba.carl@gmail.com>

Thu, Feb 18, 2021 at 2:11 PM

Reply-To: zimba.carl@gmail.com

Bcc: charlesriverallianceofboaters@googlegroups.com

CRAB,

This note is to provide you with an update on the DCR's Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) for the Charles River Basin. In essence, what the DCR is doing and planning to do to mitigate the invasive plant problem. After more than year to develop the RVMP, the DCR is moving forward with an Aquatic Invasive Survey program for the Lower Basin and Lakes District to target the removal of invasive plants. A request for quote has been issued for field work for Summer 2021. DCR has committed some funding for the project this summer. Funding in future years is subject to future budgeting. The plan of action is to remove invasive plants through the targeted use of herbicides and, in limited areas near docks, with benthic barriers.

This has been a team effort with the CRWA taking the lead with CRAB, several CRAB member clubs, and the Charles River Conservancy. Together, we are pushing the DCR to focus on removing invasive plants in the Lower Basin this summer. A broader view of the invasive plant problem includes removal of invasive plants in the Lake District also. While removal of invasive plants in both the Lower Basin and the Lakes District is planned, complete eradication of these invasive plants is likely impossible so a long-term plan to continually address the threat needs to be developed.

Carl Zimba
Vice-president
Charles River Alliance of Boaters
www.CharlesRiverAllianceofBoaters.org

More detailed timeline:

2018-2020 Weston & Sampson hired to develop the RVMP. To date, this report has not yet been released to the public.

12/16/2020 Stakeholder Meeting with DCR which was attended by several people from CRAB as well as the CRWA, CRC, etc

1/13/2021 CRWA submitted a letter (see attached) to the DCR in response to a call for public comments on the RVMP. This was cosigned by CRAB, Charles River Conservancy, Community Rowing, Head of the Charles Regatta, Riverside BC, Cambridge BC, and Watertown YC. The thrust of the letter included (1) the Lower Basin is increasingly difficult to navigate, (2) aquatic invasives pose a significant safety threat, and (3) an urgent call to action to remove plants this coming summer. Several areas of potential removal were also specified.

1/15/2021 CRWA met with the DCR RVMP team

Reviewed the comment letter, discussed proposed Aquatic Invasive Survey management program, and requested to review the W&S report which has not yet been released to the public

1/29/2021 CRWA met with the DCR RVMP team

DCR to contact Conservation Commissions (Boston, Cambridge, Newton, Watertown)

DCR sends out a request for quote for plant removal work to be done this summer. RFQs were due 2/13/2021.

2/26/2021 Meeting scheduled for DCR and CRWA to discuss plans

3/2021 DCR and CRWA will begin planning for removal of riverbank invasive species

Summer 2021 Removal of invasive plants in the Lower Basin is expected to commence in mid to late summer

2022 Removal of invasive plants in the Lakes District is expected to begin in 2022

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January 13, 2021

Via Email

Jennifer Norwood, Director of External Affairs and Partnerships
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street #900
Boston, MA 02114
jennifer.norwood@state.ma.us

Re: Comments on Charles River Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP)

Dear Ms. Norwood:

We, Charles River Watershed Association (“CRWA”), Charles River Alliance of Boaters (“CRAB”), Charles River Conservancy (“CRC”), Community Rowing, Inc. (“CRI”), Head of the Charles Regatta (“HOTC”), Riverside Boat Club (“RBC”), Cambridge Boat Club (“CBC”), and Watertown Yacht Club jointly submit the following comments to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (“DCR”) on the Charles River Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan (“RVMP”).

First, a brief history of how we got here.

- In **July 2018**, DCR invited stakeholders to a meeting with Weston & Sampson who was recently hired by DCR to prepare a Charles River Riverbank Vegetation Management (RVMP) Plan focusing on terrestrial or riverbank restoration. CRWA, Head of the Charles, and others urged DCR to expand the scope beyond terrestrial invasive plants to include aquatic invasive plants as well.
- In **April 2019**, CRWA met with DCR at DCR Headquarters and discussed various options for dealing with aquatic invasives. DCR said they would not take the lead but were willing to play a supporting role, especially in the area of the Lower Basin, similar to the dynamic in the Lakes District, where CRWA worked with DCR and residents to address invasives there.
- In **June 2019**, a meeting was held at the Cambridge Boat Club that included DCR, CRWA, Paddle Boston, Community Boating, Inc., CRI, and Head of the Charles. At this meeting, DCR heard from many users of the river about how important it was to control invasives in the Lower Basin, especially eurasian watermilfoil. As a followup to the meeting, the groups in attendance submitted letters to DCR Commissioner Leo Roy urging more

action on controlling invasive growth in the Lower Basin, especially european water chestnut, eurasian watermilfoil, and fanwort.

- In **August 2019**, CRWA reached out to DCR to ask about the status of this work and was told that Weston & Sampson was still focused on “baseline evaluation and data gathering” and that “recommendations will be developed over the fall/winter.”
- In **September 2019**, upon hearing news of DCR Commissioner Roy’s retirement, CRWA began reaching out to the acting Commissioner to make sure nothing fell through the cracks in terms of planning around addressing invasives.
- In **September 2020** CRWA met with DCR Commissioner Montgomery and others and asked about the status of the Weston & Sampson report.
- In **November 2020**, CRWA heard back from DCR Deputy Commissioner Connors that DCR would arrange the meeting held on December 16, 2020.

We would like to begin our comments by expressing our appreciation that the December 16 meeting was held, because as the above timeline shows, Charles River stakeholders and DCR have discussed the problem of aquatic invasive species for several years, and it is time for action. These non-native species are damaging to the ecological health of the river, as they crowd out native species, limit habitats for native fish and aquatic animals, and change the overall natural conditions of the river. They also pose a safety hazard for recreation, causing boats to capsize when oars become tangled in the vegetation, and cause boaters, rowers, and kayakers to congregate in the middle of the river due to narrowing water channels, increasing the chance of collision.

Current details about the RVMP are insufficient.

At the December 16 meeting, aspects of the Weston & Sampson (W&S) report were provided. While the summary provided valuable context, we would find it more helpful to read the actual report, especially recommendations for controlling invasive species at various parts of the river. It is our understanding that the report also includes details for controlling land-based invasive species, which many of us are interested in and actively partnering with DCR on removal.

We appreciate that DCR is interested in our feedback to the December 16 presentation, but without more details such as a proposed project timeline, proposed treatment areas, and a defined budget with specified funding sources, it is difficult to provide useful comments. It would also be helpful to be able to review reports of the initial plant surveys conducted in the Lower Basin and reports of Ware’s Cove and Purgatory Cove herbicide treatments.

A pilot program should begin in Summer 2021.

The sooner one acts to eradicate an invasive species, the better. Continuing to delay action towards invasive management in the Charles River has implications for permanent ecological changes and damage, requiring longer-term, higher-cost management. We would like to see development and implementation of a pilot program this coming summer, with a combination of manual and herbicide treatment to effectively target aggressive invasive species choking the Charles, specifically eurasian watermilfoil.

With consideration of DCR's AIS Survey Biovolume Report, we recommend the following sites for locations of the pilot:

- (1) Between Arsenal and Eliot Bridges
- (2) N Beacon Bridge, heading upstream towards Watertown Dam
- (3) Between Eliot and Anderson Bridges
- (4) Near and under Galen St. Bridge

At this time, we are unable to endorse specific treatments without more information on DCR's selected AIS Management Options. However, with preliminary research, we suggest the following management techniques to be researched and reported on in DCR's RVMP Report.

Manual treatment: A combination of specialized manual harvesting techniques can be effective with even the most aggressive invasive species, such as eurasian watermilfoil. Manual harvesting techniques include hand pulling, diver assisted suction harvesting ("DASH"), bottom barriers, and mechanical harvesting. These techniques are costly and labor intensive, yet are successful at managing aquatic invasives without the contention and radiating ecological impacts of herbicides.

Herbicide treatment: Of the recommended AIS Management Options¹, preliminary readings show ProcellaCOR herbicide treatment has great success at managing and eradicating eurasian watermilfoil in aquatic bodies with minimal side effects on native plants^{2,3}. However, **due to the fact that it has only recently received national registration in 2018 and a lack of peer-reviewed published field trials**, we are hesitant

¹ See Table. 5 "Charles River Basin Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan: Stakeholder Meeting," *Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR)*, 16. Dec 2020.

² "Tuxedo Lake, Wee Wah and Little Wee Wah Aquatic Plant Sampling Report," Northeast Aquatic Research, LLC, 24 Jan. 2020.

³ "Herbicide Treatment Analysis, Targeting *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian watermilfoil)," *Ecological Integrity Service*, Aug. 2019.

campaign could include installing signs near a treatment location or at a nearby community boathouse. Signs could provide brief information on the treatment and website links that further explain the project.

We eagerly anticipate the detailed plans for tackling aquatic *and* land-based invasive species within the Charles River Reservation and park systems. We look forward to working with DCR to help implement these plans, and offer our help collaboratively and creatively to implement management strategies. We are deeply committed to the success of this project, and look forward to turning these recommendations into actions.

Sincerely,

Emily Norton, Executive Director
Charles River Watershed Association

Carl Zimba, Vice President
Charles River Alliance of Boaters

Laura Jasinski, Executive Director
Charles River Conservancy

Ted Benford, Executive Director
Kane Larin, Director of Special Projects & Relationships
Community Rowing, Inc.

Frederick V. Schoch, Executive Director
Head of the Charles Regatta

Lynn Osborn, President
Riverside Boat Club

Beth Mooney, President
Cambridge Boat Club

Robert Balducci, Commodore
Watertown Yacht Club

to recommend its application in the Charles River at this stage. To this end, we recommend that DCR begin any treatment of herbicide within a small-scale pilot site and monitor closely for impacts on target and non-target species, along with monitoring herbicide dilution rates. We recommend DCR review Massachusetts' Use Restrictions for ProcellaCOR⁴, along with the other recommended herbicides, and request that DCR continue to research impacts throughout the pilot study. We eagerly await reviewing any preliminary findings in the RVMP Report and any subsequent research and monitoring results. We also urge DCR to communicate all information concerning invasive management techniques, *especially the use of herbicide treatment*, with Conservation Commissions, other stakeholders, and the public early in the process.

Risks associated with invasive species treatment and control must be managed.

While we were pleased to see initial treatment options presented, we ask DCR to expound upon their AIS Management proposals⁵ and recommend seeking consultation from a specialized aquatic resource management professional. We ask DCR to cull their list, identifying and selecting treatments proven effective through scientific research that remain both economically feasible with a proposed budget and timeline and minimally damaging to the ecosystem.

In this, we ask to see a detailed plan for any biological or herbicidal treatments, including: location, application frequency, and dosage strength; and a robust monitoring plan--not only monitoring the targeted invasive species, but surrounding habitat health parameters for adverse change, including: dissolved oxygen levels, phosphorus, non-targeted plant and animal populations, and harmful compounds from the applied treatments. For successful risk management, we recommend identifying any associated potential or documented impacts prior to treatment and carefully monitoring for changes in this direction. A successful monitoring program would include baseline measurements, regular testing throughout the application period, and post-treatment assessments.

The RVMP should include an outreach and education component.

In an effort to keep the community at-large involved and informed with the management of invasives, we suggest launching an educational campaign about the RVMP in the watershed. Ideally, this program would fit into the budget of the initial RVMP funding. For example, this

⁴ "ProcellaCOR Herbicide Product Summary and Use Restrictions," *MDAR/MassDEP*, 2019.

⁵ See Table. 5 "Charles River Basin Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan: Stakeholder Meeting," *Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR)*, 16. Dec 2020.



Design & Use Guidelines for the Downtown Waterfront Public Meeting

Mar 10, 2021

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Contact Name:

Chris Busch

Contact Email Address:

Chris.Busch@Boston.gov

Contact Phone:

617.918.4451

Type:

Public Meeting

Location:

Virtual Meeting

Description:

Join us for the first virtual community workshop for the Downtown Waterfront Design & Use Guidelines—a six-month process to develop consistent design and use standards for the public realm, promote climate resilience and improve management of the watershed. We are looking to hear your thoughts on how to better activate, navigate and adapt the Downtown Waterfront, and how to make the public realm more welcoming and accessible to all residents and visitors. The workshop will be the first of various community engagement opportunities over the coming months.

We are looking to hear your thoughts on how to better activate the Downtown Waterfront, ensure the area is welcoming and accessible to all residents and visitors, and create an improved sense of place and clarity.

How to Participate

This meeting will be hosted online, using Zoom. You must register using [this link](#) then you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining the meeting. If you're calling in by phone, you'll need to download the Zoom application to see our presentation.

Register in advance for this meeting:

www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlTf-uhrD8jHLjgRxSVnQ6YTknrFZczZiU

Toll free call in number: 833.568.8864

Meeting ID: 160 829 2496



Please visit our [website](#) for additional information. If you have questions or concerns that need to be considered prior to the meeting please contact Chris Busch, Chris.Busch@Boston.gov

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) has postponed all in-person BPDA-held public meetings regarding Article 80 development projects and planning initiatives. View more information on the BPDA's [COVID-19 response](#).

Related

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Downtown Waterfront Planning Initiative

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Boston Planning & Development Agency | One City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02201 |
Tel: 617.722.4300 Fax: 617.248.1937

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