

Boston Harbor still needs our attention

This article by Scot Lehigh appeared in the Boston Globe on August 21, 2015

At a time when August heat drives one's fancy beachward, let's take a moment to consider Boston Harbor: What it was, what it is now, and what it could be.

As a young reporter, I spent a good deal of time writing about the woeful state of the harbor. In those days, taking off from Logan, you could often see a plume of barely treated sewage discoloring the harbor from the outfall of the area's antiquated Deer Island plant.

In heavy rains, meanwhile, combined storm and sewer systems overflowed into the harbor or its tributaries. But wary of the clean-up costs, political leaders had spent years dragging their feet. The sad result was that the Boston area had made a cesspool of its aquatic front yard.

A lawsuit, several determined judges, a new agency (the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority), billions of dollars, a modern sewage-treatment facility, and several decades later, the harbor is now a glistening resource.

And yet, we haven't quite finished the job, notes Bruce Berman, director of strategy, communications, and programs at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the harbor and promoting and programming its beaches.

Berman's group recently evaluated 14 Boston-area beaches based on the amount of time between Memorial Day and July 18 that it's been safe for swimming.

South Boston's beaches were stellar. Here's why: In 2011, the MWRA opened a 2.1 mile tunnel/tank capable of holding 19 million gallons of storm and waste water, which is later pumped to the Deer Island facility for treatment. That project, which cost about \$250 million, has all but eliminated beach closings in Southie.

But several problems stand out. The worst is King's Beach, in Lynn and Swampscott. After storms, sewage-laced stormwater from those two communities regularly results in



Photo Credit: John Tlumacki - Globe Staff/File 2006

high bacteria counts — and a beach that wasn't suitable for swimming 26 percent of the time.

That's a particular shame because King's is a sizable, easily accessible, two-community beach.

In Boston, one relatively small spit of sand also has a big problem: Tenean Beach in Dorchester. On Wednesday, when Berman and I visited, Tenean was closed for swimming, though one brave soul plied the waters anyway. It was unsafe for swimming about a third of the time in early to

mid-summer, according to Save the Harbor's study.

So what would it take to get those beaches in shape?

At Tenean, Berman suspects part of the problem is that nearby Victory Park has become a favorite spot for professional dog-walkers to let their canine charges run — and, um, off-load canine after-product, which rain washes into the harbor. Better enforcement could lead to a noticeable improvement.

King's Beach is more difficult. Lynn and Swampscott are trying to ferret out and fix old leaky pipes and improper or illicit sewage hook-ups. A similar effort is taking place in Quincy, where Wollaston Beach was unfit for swimming 10 percent of the time.

At the behest of Speaker Bob DeLeo, last year's environmental bond bill included a \$20 million authorization to aid communities with that work. "Making resources available to help these communities address these problems is absolutely critical to getting it done," says Berman.

Now, it's one thing to have the money legislatively authorized, quite another to have the spending approved by the administration. And yet, this effort should be a natural for a CEO who 1) loves digging into gritty problems 2) lives in Swampscott and 3) prides himself on his urban agenda.

In other words, Charlie Baker, roll up your sleeves, sharpen your pencil, and add a dose of executive energy to solving these problems.

Scot Lehigh can be reached at lehigh@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @GlobeScotLehigh.

The Spectacular Summer of 2015

Art on the Shore & Pirates on the Harbor

This summer, Save the Harbor asked Andres Amador, a San Francisco based sand artist, to come to the beaches of Boston Harbor to showcase his incredible work and teach our staff and the community how to master the art of sand raking.

Andres spent three days on our beaches, transforming the shoreline into masterful works of art using only gardening tools.



The designs were spectacular – and very short-lived, as soon as the tide began to rise, the artwork was wiped away. You may have seen his work on Carson Beach in South Boston, Constitution Beach in East Boston, or on Spectacle Island in the Boston Harbor Islands National Park.

We hope to have Andres back again in 2016 to continue to make beautiful art in the sand on Boston's beaches.

Save the Harbor also was pleased to work with Norah Dooley, a well-known performance artist and storyteller.



Dressed as Mary Read the Pirate, Norah Dooley spent the summer telling ghost stories and pirate tales of Boston Harbor to the participants in our Youth Environmental Education Programs. Mary Read joined us at multiple Better Beaches Program events along the region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket and on our free Treasures of Spectacle Island Cruises in the fall.

If you missed her this year, Norah will be back again next summer to share her stories and encourage you to share yours!



After a very wicked winter we are glad to say that the summer of 2015 was a spectacular one for kids and families on Boston Harbor, the Harbor Islands and the region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket.

This summer Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's free youth and beach programs connected more than 25,000 underserved and low-income youth and teens to Boston Harbor and the Boston Harbor Islands.

Our summer youth program staff of 36 served young people from 110 youth development and community organizations from 38 communities at 8 program sites, 20 beach events and 29 island adventures.

worked so hard to restore and protect.

This summer, in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Save the Harbor launched a new program at Carson Beach in South Boston.

With the support of our youth program funders and partners, this summer Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's **Boston Harbor Explorers Program @ DCR's Carson Beach** brought free swimming and kayak lessons, soccer clinics, fishing, clamming, archaeology, art on the beach and storytelling on the shore to 2,500 young people from dozens of youth development and community groups from South Boston, and across the city and



With your support, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay's free Youth Environmental Education Programs have introduced 133,492 young people to Boston Harbor and the Boston Harbor Islands since we began them in 2002, making us the **Boston Harbor Connection** for a generation of young people and their families from every neighborhood in the City of Boston and from cities and towns across the metropolitan region.

Our free programs combine marine science, harbor history, archaeology and healthy outdoor activities to bring Boston Harbor alive for the region's young people. They connect underserved youth and teens to the spectacular harbor we have

around the region.

"Today, thanks to all of our hard work, the beaches of South Boston are the cleanest urban beaches in the nation," said Save the Harbor's Bruce Berman. "In 2016, we'll continue to strengthen and expand our free youth and beach programs because we believe that every child in the region deserves a clean beach they can call their own."

To learn more, download a copy of our 2015 Youth Program Report on our website at www.savetheharbor.org and visit our youth and beach program blog "Sea, Sand & Sky" at www.blog.savetheharbor.org

Let's Talk Trash

This fall Save the Harbor hosted beach cleanups in South Boston and Dorchester with our corporate partners from Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA and Vertex during their company wide days of service.

Working with Save the Harbor's staff and interns, these terrific teams of highly motivated volunteers helped the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) maintain Carson Beach Reservation and Pleasure Bay in South Boston and Tenean Beach and Savin Hill/Malibu Beach in Dorchester.



Blue Cross/Blue Shield's Blue Crew at Carson Beach

On September 16th, Blue Cross Blue Shield's Blue Crew worked tirelessly in South Boston from Carson Beach all the way to the Sugar Bowl repainting shade shelters, removing organic material, collecting trash and debris and sweeping sand away from beach access ramps and stairs. After all was said and done the 80 BCBS employees removed a total of 18 tons of trash from the beach.



Volunteers from Vertex at Tenean Beach

On October 2nd, Vertex "Vertexians" braved the wind and the rain while working on Tenean Beach and Savin Hill/Malibu Beach in Dorchester. The crew of 65 Vertex volunteers removed a total of eight tons of trash and vegetation from Tenean Beach and the surrounding playground, parking lot, and access road. They also removed nine tons of debris and vegetation from the boardwalk, concrete path, and along the opposite side of Morrissey Boulevard used most often by boaters at Savin Hill/Malibu Beach.

Thanks to all of you at Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA and Vertex who volunteered to help keep Boston's beaches beautiful.

Our Better Beaches Partners Are The Best!



The Better Beaches Awards recipients line up after receiving their awards

Save the Harbor/Save the Bay launched our Better Beaches Program in 2008 to help local communities and beaches friends groups create and sustain free events and activities on the region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket, as recommended by the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, which we help lead and manage for the Legislature.

In the past, funds to support our Better Beaches program came solely from our annual **Harpoon Helps Cupid Splash** cold water plunge and pledge fundraiser to win JetBlue flights. It raised \$40,000 from 500 participants and sponsors to support 30 free events in 2015.



Kennedy Elsey from Mix 104.1 and her team at the Harpoon Helps Cupid Splash on M Street Beach

Over the past 7 years, our community partners in Nahant, Lynn, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy, and Hull have leveraged \$409,258 in small grants received from Save the Harbor/Save the Bay with \$1,463,075 in cash and in-kind contributions from local government and small businesses for a total investment of \$1,872,333 in 284 free events and programs for the region's residents and visitors alike.

In 2015, working with the legislative members of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay secured an initial appropriation of \$190,000 from the Legislature to enable the Department of Conservation and Recreation to supplement the funds we raised at the Harpoon Helps Cupid Splash.

As a result, in 2015 Save the Harbor awarded \$204,258 in small grants and additional organizational support to 35

groups in 9 beachfront communities and waterfront neighborhoods.

This year our Better Beaches Program community partners leveraged our funds with \$647,353 in cash and in-kind support from local government and businesses and more than 8,500 volunteer hours to support 70 free concerts, beach festivals, soccer tournaments, sand raking and sand sculpting competitions on public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket.



The Hull "Harbor Illumination"

This year's events included concerts in Nahant and Lynn, sand sculpting in Revere, youth and family programs in Winthrop, free kayaks and campfires in East Boston, beach festivals in South Boston, Dorchester and Quincy and the Harbor Illumination in Hull. It also included film festivals and movie nights, storytelling, art on the shore, beach soccer clinics, a Quidditch tournament and much, much, more.



Kayak Connections at Carson Beach

In fact, this year's program was such a success that we have already begun planning for 2016.

You can download a copy of Save the Bay's Better Beaches Program report on our website at www.savetheharbor.org

Fishing at Fan Pier



Tournament hosts Joe and Mike Fallon are quick to remind us that the Fan Pier Invitational Youth Fishing Tournament is about catching not just fishing. As you can see from the photo, that's exactly what the fifty kids who took part in this year's tournament did.

From left to right - Kiss 108's Billy Costa, Antonio Fernandes of Dorchester, former Boston Bruin Shawn Thornton, Mike Fallon of the Fallon Company, Danny O'Hara of Quincy and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay President Patricia Foley show off O'Hara's prize-winning 49 inch striped bass.

Youth Staff



This summer Save the Harbor employed a youth program staff of 36 including 7 Senior Harbor Educators, 5 college students who served as Lead Harbor Explorers and 21 high school students who served as Junior Program Assistants. Working together, they connected more than 26,000 youth and teens to Boston Harbor through the All Access Boston Harbor program and the Boston Harbor Explorers program. They worked to engage local youth in activities such as environmental exploration, swimming and kayaking, fishing and clamming, storytelling and art on the shore at sailing centers and public beaches around Boston, as well as in the Boston Harbor Islands National Park.

We look forward to seeing many of them on the harbor, beaches and islands next year as part of our youth program staff or with their friends and families.

See what they had to say about their experiences this summer on our youth program blog, Sea, Sand & Sky at www.blog.savetheharbor.org

Metropolitan Beaches Commission



In October Metropolitan Beaches Commission Co-Chairs Senator Tom McGee of Lynn and Rep. RoseLee Vincent of Revere announced that the Commission will hold a series of regional public hearings on the state of the Metropolitan Region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket.

The first public hearing was held on Saturday morning, November 7th at the Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development Community Room at 10 Church Street in Lynn.

Metropolitan Beaches Commission Co-Chair Senator McGee, who has served on the Commission since its inception in 2007, and Co-Chair Vincent hosted the hearing. Commissioners Rep. Brendan P. Crighton of Lynn, Robert Tucker of the Friends of Lynn and Nahant Beach and newly appointed Commissioners Rep. Donald Wong of Saugus, Nahant Town Administrator Jeffrey Chelgren as well as other Commissioners from waterfront neighborhoods and beachfront communities from Nahant to Nantasket and more than 50 residents were on hand to share their thoughts.

"These public hearings give the region's residents an opportunity to share their ideas about how to continue to improve our region's public beaches, and give the Commission and the Department of Conservation and Recreation the chance to assess where we are today and where we hope to go in the future" said Commission Co-Chair Senator Tom McGee of Lynn. "Working together, I am confident that we can protect what we have accomplished and help move these beaches from good to great."

"We've made great progress on these beaches for all the region's families," said Commission Co-Chair Representative RoseLee Vincent of Revere. "They have truly benefited from the investments we have made in our beaches and it's important that we don't lose the gains we have made."

"It has taken years of effort to change public perception and improve these beaches," said Save the Harbor/Save the Bay board member David Spillane of Goody Clancy, who has served as a lead consultant to the Commission since its inception. "However, we could lose this progress in short order if the resources and commitment aren't there to protect the progress we have made and build on our success."

The Metropolitan Beaches Commission is comprised of elected officials and community, civic, nonprofit, and business leaders from Boston and the metropolitan region's waterfront neighborhoods and beachfront communities.

The MBC was created in 2006 by the Massachusetts Legislature to take an in-depth look at the metropolitan region's public beaches in Nahant, Lynn, Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Quincy and Hull that are managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The Commission reconvened in 2013 to examine the impacts of the reforms and recommendations made in its first report "Beaches We Can Be Proud Of" and issued additional findings and recommendations to better leverage these resources for residents in the future in their 2014 report "Waves of Change". Today the MBC is a permanent Commission, which reports annually to the House and the Senate.

For more information about the upcoming MBC hearings in your community, send an email with your contact information to info@savetheharbor.org

For more information about the MBC and its history and accomplishments, or to download copies of the Commission's 2007 and 2014 reports, visit www.savetheharbor.org/MBC



Save the Harbor President, Patricia A. Foley, and her husband Bruce Berman.

When Save the Harbor was founded nearly 30 years ago, the thought that Boston's polluted beaches, our abandoned waterfront and neglected harbor islands would ever be seen as assets instead of liabilities was a radical one. The very idea that our young people and their families would ever be able to use Boston Harbor, our public beaches or the Boston Harbor Islands as a learning laboratory and a healthy place to play was a distant dream.

As Save the Harbor prepares to celebrate our 30th Anniversary, we are proud to say that distant dream is becoming a reality.

South Boston is now home to the cleanest urban beaches in America, which were safe for swimming every day in 2015, when frequent storms forced other area beaches to close. The Boston Harbor Islands have become civic, educational and recreational resources for a generation

A Letter from the President

of young people and Boston's renewed waterfront and the region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket are emerging as destinations for residents and visitors alike.

As Save the Harbor prepares to celebrate our 30th Anniversary in 2016, there are still two things we need to do today to finish the job we began together in 1986, and we need your help and support to do them.

The first is to keep our commitment to clean water by working with our Beaches Science Advisory Committee, the Baker Administration and local officials to produce site-specific plans to address the ongoing pollution problems at King's Beach in Lynn and Swampscott and Tenean Beach in Dorchester as we did in South Boston.

The second is to expand our free youth and beach programs, which have made Save the Harbor the Boston Harbor Connection for 130,000 young people and their families. In 2016, with your support, we will offer 30,000 underserved youth and teens 30 free trips to the Boston Harbor Islands and free environmental education and enrichment programs at 8 program sites, including our new Boston Harbor Explorers Program @ DCR's Carson Beach in South Boston. We will also continue to work with the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, which we help lead and manage for the Massachusetts Legislature, the Department of Conservation and

Recreation and with 30 community partners to offer 70 free Better Beaches Program events on the region's public beaches from Nahant to Nantasket in the summer of 2016.

I know that you care about our community and that you love Boston's Harbor, the islands and our public beaches, and that you understand and value the work we have done and the work we intend to do.

We hope to raise \$30,000 by December 30th so that we can make our 30th Anniversary our best year ever.

Your contribution of \$30, \$300, \$3,000, or whatever you can afford to give, will help us restore and protect these spectacular urban natural resources and share them with the public for everyone to enjoy.

Thanks in advance for your support. It means the world to us and to the region's underserved youth, teens and families, who all deserve clean beaches they can call their own.

All the best,
Patricia Foley
Patricia A. Foley, President

P.S. It's easy to make a contribution today on our website at www.savetheharbor.org



Susan Tracy out for a spin with her daughter Annie on her 13' Boston Whaler.

When Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Board Member Susan Tracy was growing up in the Oak Square neighborhood of Brighton, Boston Harbor and the region's public beaches were an important part of her life.

"I grew up in a big family, with five kids. I have a vivid memory of one of our neighbors, a college student who lived in the apartment behind us, packing a picnic lunch of tuna fish sandwiches in a bread bag and taking kids from the neighborhood to Nantasket Beach on the ferry for the day. I must have been 9 or ten. He showed us how to get to the water," said Tracy. "I couldn't wait to do it again,"

"When I was I was a camp counselor

Save the Harbor's Susan Tracy is "All In"

at Jackson Mann we would take the 57 bus to Kenmore, then the Green Line to Government Center, hop on the Blue Line and head to Revere Beach. The best part was you could do it with just one transfer – because kids could switch for free at Arlington."

Given the role that Boston Harbor played in her childhood, you won't be surprised to learn that what first drew her to Save the Harbor was our free youth environmental education programs, which served more than 25,000 young people in 2015.

"The thing I love is that we bring so many city kids from working class and blue collar communities to the water and out to the islands," said Tracy. "If you are a kid from Southie, Eastie or Dorchester, you have a beach in your neighborhood, but not every kid is lucky enough to live by the sea. I'm proud that Save the Harbor connects kids and families from neighborhoods like Brighton, Allston, Mission Hill and Roxbury to the harbor, the islands and our beaches. After all, they are everybody's beaches."

Susan Tracy has had a long career in public service, first as the Head of Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission for Ray Flynn where "one of the most fun parts of

my job was visiting the city's shelter at Long Island."

She first met Save the Harbor's President Patty Foley and Board Chair Joe Newman in 1983 while working for the Flynn and Kerry campaigns. When she decided to run for State Representative in 1990 "Patty was there for me, so supportive, so loyal. She's the best. She gave me the confidence to run and win. When she asked me to serve on Save the Harbor's board, I was all in."

Today she is President of The Strategy Group, a Boston based public affairs firm specializing in media and community relations and advocacy. She and her partner Doris Brodhead live in Newton, and have two children; Ted, 15, a sophomore at Newton North and Annie, 13, who is in the 7th grade at Bigelow Middle School.

"Boston Harbor is an incredible natural resource," said Tracy. "We are lucky to have a great group like Save the Harbor to take care of it and to share it with kids and families from all our neighborhoods."

All of us at Save the Harbor think that Susan Tracy is an incredible resource, and we consider ourselves lucky to have her on our board.

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