

December 4, 2021

Maria Rodriguez, Environmental Policy Assistant  
Save the Harbor/ Save the Bay  
[Rodriguez@SavetheHarbor.org](mailto:Rodriguez@SavetheHarbor.org)

**RE: Public Comment in Support of Improving Beach Access for People with Disabilities**

To whom it may concern:

This comment is written in support of the call for improvements and advancements to the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program; specifically Improving Access for People with Disabilities.

Summer in Massachusetts means spending as many hours as possible at the beach sunbathing, swimming, and relaxing by the seaside. Being able to, when the weather is right, grab a beach chair or towel, some sunscreen, and a book and head down to the beach for an hour or two is an activity of life that many of us take for granted. The simple satisfaction of going to the beach was never more apparent than during the pandemic. However, for many disabled individuals and families in the Commonwealth, experiencing the beach is not an option because accessibility to the public space for disabled people is woefully minimal. At my hometown beach in Lynn the minimal accessibility improvements are nonexistent. Undoubtedly, addressing this is the obligation of those charged with protecting, promoting and enhancing this public good. The benefits of doing so are important for countless disabled individuals and families in the Commonwealth and an indicator of how we value the most vulnerable members of our community.

I have perspective on the impact of accessibility for people with disabilities. My older brother, Nicholas, was born with a congenital disease which left him paralyzed and he uses a wheelchair. Because of the enormous effort of my parents and our community Nick has led a rich and full life. But not every disabled person or their family has the support or resources that Nick, so thankfully, has. Presumably, going to the beach could not stop Nick; after all he has summited Mt. Washington. Nevertheless, when Nick and my mother tried to take a walk at Nahant/Lynn beach, Nick's chair got stuck in the soft sand between the paved path and the mobility mat. A dangerous situation which required numerous onlookers to come to Nick and my mother's aid. This is not only dangerous but embarrassing and unnecessary given the resources available. Better maintenance, monitoring, signage, improved mobility mats and mat placement, and better policies and procedures are available if we desire them. Some small improvements don't necessarily involve a significant cost but some attitudinal barriers are much higher.

From 2012-2015 I coached skiing with the New England Disabled Sports Team at Loon Mountain in New Hampshire. I cannot adequately describe the pride of a disabled veteran gearing himself or herself up to hit the slopes, or the wonder of a recently disabled young person reliving the normalcy of going snowboarding for the day with friends, or the pure joy of someone like Nick who was born with a congenital disease but never experienced the thrill of sliding down a hill. From breaking this barrier these people are forever changed and there is a part of them that is reinvigorated, uncovered, or lifted for that moment. I imagine that getting someone to the top of a

ski hill and managing the risk of that activity is far more complicated and riskier than simply getting mats and chairs to the seaside. But the pleasure and enjoyment derived from a day at the beach is no less important.

For Nick, activities where he is not to one side, or a burden are enriching and empowering. Getting to the hard packed sand and setting up a spot to sit in the sun would not be a small act for Nick and people like Nick. There are disabled people with talents and abilities who can evolve and grow the way we use our beaches but they cannot bring those ideas forward because it is not possible with the current state of accessibility.

Disabled people encounter barriers at every turn and it becomes disheartening and numbing. This is a low hanging opportunity to remove barriers to a public resource that is supposed to be enjoyed by ALL regardless of disabled status.

Thank you for your time and attention. I applaud the work being engaged with by the Commonwealth. I am happy to discuss this further and look forward to the day when I can meet my brother Nick at the beach without worrying about the hassle to do so.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "AJ Capano". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent "A" and "J" at the beginning.

Alexander J. Capano, Esq.  
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**FROM:** [amponte@msn.com](mailto:amponte@msn.com)

Hello,

Thank you for info about the zoom meeting tomorrow am. My question is about the ramp to the beach at Wollaston beach. It has an overlook of the beach deck and then there is a ramp to the beach that dead ends into the sand. I don't understand why it has been like this since it was built which has to be at least 7-8 years or more.

It would be quite easy to install a mobi mat at the end of the ramp to provide access to the beach. I've have seen this at beaches on Cape Cod.

Angela Ponte

467 Quincy Shore Drive

Quincy, MA 02171



*The mission of the Revere Beach Partnership  
is to preserve and enhance America's first  
public beach for the enjoyment of all.*

January 7, 2020

Mr. Chris Mancini  
Executive Director  
Save The Harbor Save The Bay  
212 Northern Ave #304  
Boston, MA 02210

RE: Metropolitan Beaches Commission and Improving Access for People with Disabilities

Dear Mr. Mancini,

On behalf of the Revere Beach Partnership, I am writing you about the Metropolitan Beaches Commission meeting held in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and Recreation for improving access at Massachusetts beaches for people with disabilities.

Following that call, the Revere Beach Partnership had the opportunity to meet with the ADA Coordinator for the City of Revere. Collectively, we had the opportunity to brainstorm several enhancements that we would like to see made would like to spearhead on the Revere Beach Reservation. These enhancements include, but are not limited to;

1. The installation of lighted crosswalks and traffic signals along Revere Beach Blvd.
2. The improvement of the current accessible parking spots along Revere Beach Blvd.
  - a. Many of the existing spaces are located too close to existing crosswalks making it dangerous for pedestrians as the cross as they are not visible to traffic
  - b. Many of the existing spaces are not located in an adequate location to wheelchair-accessible curb cuts
  - c. Many of the existing accessible spaces are located too close to other cars not allowing for accessible vans with ramps to operate smoothly
3. The creation of additional accessible parking spaces that span the distance of Revere Beach Blvd. from Elliot Circle to Carey Circle.
4. Improved infrastructure at the openings along the seawall
  - a. Many of these openings are not level making it difficult for people with mobility issues to access the beach
5. Improved access for people with mobilities to access the beach
  - a. The current beach wheelchairs on Revere Beach are not readily available for people to access and many people do not know they exist. We would like to develop a plan for people to have access to these items.
  - b. DCR has repeatedly told us that the reason they do not have beach ramps on the beach is because of the daily raking and combing of the beach that occurs. we believe the portable nature of the ramps should create the opportunity for both the daily raking and the use of the ramps. We would like to develop a plan to allow for on beach access for those with mobility issues.



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On behalf of the Revere Beach Partnership and the City of Revere, we are excited to bring these proposed changes to both the Metropolitan Beaches Commission as well as the Department of Conservation and Recreation. We are excited to have the opportunity to “enhance America’s first public beach for the enjoyment of all” and look forward to making the beach a more inclusive beach and recreation area for everyone.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Erin Lynch

Executive Director  
Revere Beach Partnership

Ralph DeCicco  
ADA Coordinator/Chair Revere Commission on Disabilities  
City of Revere

Maria, I want to thank you and Rep. Meschino for inviting my wife and me to the hearing to discuss improving handicapped access to our MA beaches, and now for offering me an opportunity to comment. I was able to listen to the entire panel discussion, but had to leave the Zoom hearing before I had a chance to make my comments during the teleconference hearing. Speaking as a board member of Friends of Nantasket Beach, I want to offer our organization's assistance with your endeavor to improve access to our State beaches to everyone. Our group already enjoys a good relationship with Save the Harbor – Save the Bay; we agree that improving everyone's access to the beach is both our duty and responsibility. Friends of Nantasket Beach's mission statement speaks to just this.

My wife and I are the parents of an adult disabled daughter, and have had firsthand experience in working with the DCR at Nantasket Beach to improve access to the beach on the Nantasket Beach Reservation. Nantasket Beach has its unique problems, some of which include the handicapped ramps filling with cobble during the winter months; they are nearly impassable to able-bodied people, let alone those with disabilities. Our other concern is the poor oversight, promotion, and management of the handicapped wheelchairs made available here.

The DCR at Nantasket Beach has, over the past few years, been more responsive in clearing these ramps earlier in the spring each year and we appreciate that. We have been told that these ramps were built to service a very different beach than what exists now. Because the level of the beach has risen above the level of the base of these ramps, the bottom portion of the ramp cannot be cleaned adequately of the cobble to provide for safe passage of disabled persons. If the cobble in the ramps was cleaned to the base of the ramp it would be below the level of the present-day beach. Compensating for these changes in the beach, the DCR covers the remaining cobble at the base of the ramps with sand to the level of the current beach. This makes the ramps much friendlier for foot traffic of the non-disabled, but still not friendly for those with wheelchairs, walkers, and canes.

The Nantasket Beach Reservation contains one mile of beautiful beach used by many persons all year round. In our experience, it has never been a welcome place for our daughter or others with disabilities to enjoy. The ADA provides for equal access to all. This is inconsistent with the current environmental restrictions on DCR's Nantasket Beach. The current status of all of the beach access ramps here prohibits the access for those with physical disabilities. Our understanding is that the handicapped ramps were built years ago for a very different beach; improvements need to be undertaken to improve the beach that now exists, making the necessary changes to provide for the ease of access of all persons visiting this beautiful beach. Improving these ramps to provide for disabled persons free and unrestricted access to Nantasket Beach would be a welcome first step. Beach mats at the bottom of new or existing ramps would be another wonderful improvement; much of the beach here is underwater at high tide, so it must be understood that the mats would have to be rolled up temporarily at high tide each day. This task could be an added to the lifeguard's daily work perhaps.

Much of the discussion at the online hearing this week centered around the use of beach wheelchairs. Nantasket beach has a selection of these chairs available, some of which we have regularly accessed in the past for our daughter. The free availability of these wheelchairs opens up the beach experience to handicapped individuals. In our early experiences here, we had to actively seek out the availability of these chairs and navigate the process of borrowing one without any aid or direction at the reservation.

The beach wheelchairs on Nantasket Beach Reservation appear to be a secret to the general public. They are stored in a limited access area of the Mary Janet Murray Bathhouse; our understanding is that adaptive chairs are also stored at the Cook Comfort Station, though we have never attempted to loan one there. When we moved here six years ago, we read online about the availability of these adaptive chairs, but were unable to find any indication anywhere on the DCR property where the chairs were available to disabled persons; we opened enough doors to eventually find the chairs ourselves. To date, there is still no information posted related to the ability to loan these chairs for those with disabilities. Why not have these chairs displayed prominently outside of the closed bathhouse and easily available to those who need them? Those with disabilities visiting the beach and interested in using a beach wheelchair, now have to first locate a lifeguard along the waterfront and ask for assistance; there is no longer an attendant inside the Mary Janette Bathhouse. We were queried by DCR personnel (lifeguards) related to our accessing the bathhouse to secure one of the beach wheelchairs; some of the lifeguards this season appeared to be unaware of the loaning program. Why not display these beach wheelchairs prominently with signage sharing the process of loaning them to persons with disabilities and their families?

The loaning process worked fairly well in previous years for those of us who were aware of the program and where to find the chairs. There was an attendant inside the bathhouse and an area designated for the easy transfer of a disabled individual from their regular wheelchair to the beach chairs. Another small room was used for safe storage of the disabled visitor's regular wheelchair while they were using the beach wheelchair. The attendant inside the Mary Janette Bathhouse was there to assist with this sharing program, though I am sure he had many other responsibilities daily. Providing this ease of access to the equipment and providing assistance and oversight of this loaning program would greatly enhance the utilization of this equipment. Please consider providing services for all of Nantasket Beach Reservation's visitors by updating the ramps to provide for ADA compliant access for the disabled. Also, consider promoting the availability of the adaptive equipment; it is truly a wonderful program that needs shared with all who come here to enjoy the beach. We will be happy to share further our thoughts in person or online, and are thankful for the discussion that is being had to improve our beaches for all of her visitors.

Karen and Jim Pitrolo



December 2nd, 2021

We write to express our deep concerns about beach accessibility issues for those individuals with disabilities. We encourage the DCR to immediately work on improving the Universal Access Program in an effort to alleviate these issues. In this letter, we are largely referring to the beaches in Lynn and surrounding towns because that's where we are based out of and familiar with. However, we'd be naive to think that this isn't happening throughout the area, and after researching, listening and talking with others this seems to be a systemic issue occurring across our region.

No one loves a fun and calming beach day more than us here at Kayak and Sail Lynn (KASL). It is an experience that all of us in our beachside communities should enjoy. This belief is a large part as to why we set out on our mission of giving underserved populations in the Lynn area the opportunity to get "on the water" (i.e. participate in water-based activities, like kayaking and paddleboarding). When we started KASL, we did so knowing there are many factors that we would have to work around that residents face, which do not allow them to fully utilize one of our greatest resources (i.e. our waterfront), such socio-economic reasons, transportation issues, time limitations, etc. Admittedly, we did not anticipate physical access for some populations to be one of these barriers. That is why it deeply saddened and frustrated us, when it came to our attention that beach-goers with disabilities face such a wide array of accessibility challenges.

From our formation, we have had 3 target populations that we look to serve: children, veterans, and the disabled. We are in the planning phases of our first event for the disabled population, and it is a depressing reality that we have to take in account the limited amount of accessibility for these individuals. We knew we would face hurdles getting people *on* the water, but never imagined challenges actually physically getting them *to* the water.

It is heartbreaking to think of all those who have gone to the beach but were essentially denied access because of something out of their control. It is equally as sad to ponder how many people with disabilities never even made that attempt to go, due to a lack of confidence that they would be reasonably accommodated. To put an end both of these situations, we need to provide resources, improve policies, and make any other necessary improvements that make our beaches spaces that welcome all. While there is a lot of work to be done, we must start somewhere and we must start now.

Some of the biggest issues are the quantity and quality of access points themselves. There needs to be more, higher quality ramps, mobility mats, and handicap accessible docks and piers, that are spread out across different areas of the beach. These structures also must do more than simply just get them to the sand, but actually allow them to move around, participate in the fun, and take in all that our great beaches have to offer. As an organization that loves the water, our hope is that they could get as close to the water as they see to be safe and fit for them. Additionally, these access points will also require additional improvements like better signage to indicate where they are and their purpose, as well as stocking them with needed equipment like beach wheelchairs.

Public beaches are supposed to be for the common good, by providing easy, low stress, and cheap fun. This means everyone should be able to catch some rays in the hot summer months. We all deserve the opportunity to watch the waves crash on the beach at sunset. All are entitled to the right to make priceless memories with their loved ones at one of the greatest places on Earth - the beach!

Sincerely,

The KASL Team



From: mtlteach@comcast.ne

Sorry that I cannot attend this meeting. I am a teacher and have a class. Please let them know that the sidewalks on Conley Street in Port Norfolk, Dorchester are not accessible to people with disabilities. This would be directly at Tenean Beach and also leading up to Tenean Beach from Morrissey Blvd. No ramps, storage containers on the sidewalks, sidewalk overgrown with weeds.

Thank you,

Maria Lyons  
Port Norfolk

**FROM: [pcollins@workinc.org](mailto:pcollins@workinc.org)**

Ms. Rodriguez,

I think one thing to remember is that not all people who are physically challenged are in wheelchairs so creating walking access that is not a 100 mile walk around is crucial for those who may walk with a cane or have stability issues. The Audubon Society did a great job at Broadmeadow Brook with a walking path that has ropes to allow those with sight challenges to navigate the path which also might be something to think about.

I am not able to attend the hearing but wanted to get these points out as it comes up often with family and friends.

PCC

Paula Collins  
AVP Fitchburg Employment  
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