

May 17, 2023

Chairman Michael Rodrigues  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 212  
Boston, MA 02133  
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Dear Chairman Rodrigues,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Mystic River Watershed Association, whose mission is to protect and restore the Mystic River on behalf of the region's 554,000 residents. Thank you so much for your support for our state parks. The progress we've made would not have happened without your unwavering commitment to our public open spaces. As we go through the FY24 budget process, thank you as well for keeping earmarks out of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Parks and Recreation Operations account (2810-0100). This is in keeping with FY22 and FY23 final budgets, save for the snow and ice removal appropriation, which has always been in this account.

This year, both the House final and the Senate Ways & Means budgets, as they have in years past, have a Special Projects earmark account (2810-0122). However, the House FY24 final budget, in addition to placing \$3.56 million in earmarks in that account, also has \$915,000 in earmarks in the 2810-0100 operations account.

I write today to respectfully ask that the Senate final budget, aside from snow and ice removal, in keeping with past practice, place earmarks in the Special Projects account. We feel that placing these earmarks in the operations account hinders DCR's flexibility to solve statewide issues.

I also want to inform you that we are supporting the amendments filed by Sen. Rush and Sen. Rausch, 76 and 37, respectively, to bring the operations account up to the H.1 level.

Our public lands need champions like you to continue DCR's progress as more Massachusetts residents and visitors enjoy them. The benefits they bring to our Commonwealth include healthier people, a more resilient climate, and robust wildlife locally and globally. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this matter.

Sincerely,



Patrick Herron  
Executive Director

Mystic River Watershed Association