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May 24, 2010

Dear Berkshires Region Municipal Officials:

As you probably know, the invasive species zebra mussels are established in numerous waterbodies in the bordering states of NY, VT and CT, and last summer were discovered in Laurel Lake and Laurel Brook in Lee/Lenox and in portions of the Housatonic River. In response to this discovery, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs convened a Zebra Mussel Task Force to make recommendations on how to reduce the likelihood of further spread.

This letter is to inform you about some of the actions that state agencies will take in the Berkshires this summer, as informed by the recommendations of the Task Force, to help address the issue. We will need your continued help with these efforts. In addition, I hope you will join us in increased efforts to reduce the likelihood of spread of zebra mussels – helping to secure additional volunteer boat ramp monitors, developing boat wash stations in your community, and helping to educate visitors and residents about how they can take responsibility to help reduce the likelihood of zebra mussels spreading. Please contact Anne Carroll, Acting Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Office of Water Resources ([Anne.Carroll@state.ma.us](mailto:Anne.Carroll@state.ma.us) or 617 626-1395) with any questions or to discuss how your municipality and local volunteer organizations can help this summer and into the future.

The recommendations of the Task Force were presented at a public meeting in Pittsfield on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and can be found on-line at

[http://www.mass.gov/Eoeea/docs/eea/water/Zebra\\_Mussel\\_Task\\_Force\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eoeea/docs/eea/water/Zebra_Mussel_Task_Force_Recommendations.pdf).

The Task Force recommendations set out a strong program including required boat decontamination procedures and self-certification, increased monitoring, education and outreach, and continued partnerships with municipalities and volunteer organizations. In addition, the Task Force worked with Senator Ben Downing to propose legislation (SB2374, recently passed by the Senate) that will clearly establish the authority for the DCR to address aquatic invasive species issues comprehensively and over the long-term, including establishing the necessary enforcement powers to achieve compliance with regulations and management measures.

Despite the fiscal challenges we face, the Commonwealth has more than tripled the resources dedicated to addressing zebra mussels in the Berkshires this summer, through the DCR, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and in partnership with the Massachusetts Environmental

Trust (MET). Highlights of what you can expect to see during the 2010 boating and recreation season from State agencies, and parallel efforts from municipalities that we are aware of, include:

### **Boat Ramp Monitors**

Laurel Lake in Lee/Lennox: DCR has hired two full-time monitors providing daily coverage 7 days/week from now to mid-October including coverage from 6am to 8pm every Friday- Sunday and holidays.

Onota and Pontoosuc in Pittsfield: For each lake, DCR has hired one full-time monitor working five days a week Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Stockbridge Bowl/Lake Buel in Monterey; Cheshire Reservoir/ Richmond Pond: Each lake will share a monitor from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

### **Boat Wash Stations**

Stockbridge: The Massachusetts Environmental Trust is providing a \$25,000 grant to the Town of Stockbridge to provide a free boat wash station and full time staff from Memorial Day through October.

Pittsfield: The City of Pittsfield has worked with a local car wash to establish a coin-operated boat wash option that provides an effective boat decontamination option.

Great Barrington: DCR Lakes and Ponds Program staff is working with the Lake Buel Watershed Association to assist a car wash in Great Barrington to develop a boat wash station.

### **Public Access Boat Ramps -Clean Boat Forms and New Signage**

The management measures implemented last summer by the DFG will continue this year, and the effectiveness of these measures will be improved through the increased presence of boat ramp monitors and new signage. Under the DFG measures, for water bodies in the Hoosic and Housatonic watersheds that are susceptible to zebra mussel infestation, boaters seeking to use state public access boat ramps are required to decontaminate their boat in accordance with specified procedures, if it has been on waters infested with zebra mussels, and complete a *Clean Boat Certification* form.

Signage at all Public Ramps: New kiosks have been installed at all Office of Fishing and Boating public access ramps in the Housatonic Watershed. Kiosks include a box which will be stocked with brochures and Clean Boat Certification Forms.

### **Training for Volunteers and Municipal Law Enforcement**

Volunteer Boat Ramp Monitor Training: DCR provided a training at the recent LAPA West Annual Meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>, and will provide at least one additional training opportunity during the summer.

Municipal Law Enforcement Training: The Massachusetts Environmental Police provided training on May 6th for local Law Enforcement officials on current enforcement options and what to expect under the proposed legislation. Local law enforcement agents are authorized to enforce the current regulations regarding self-certification of boat decontamination at public access boat ramps owned by the Department of Fish and Game's Office of Fishing and Boating Access. During the week leading up to the Memorial Day weekend, the Massachusetts

Environmental Police will have an increased enforcement presence at these boat ramps to help educate boaters with regards to these requirements.

While we believe these efforts will help reduce the likelihood of the spread of zebra mussels, the issue of aquatic invasive species will not go away. On behalf of the EOEEA agencies that work day in and day out on the ground to protect our Commonwealth of natural resources, we look forward to working with you on this ongoing challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Phil Griffiths  
Undersecretary for the Environment  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Chair – Zebra Mussel Task Force

cc: Senator Ben Downing  
Representative Dennis Guyer  
Representative William “Smitty” Pignatelli  
Representative Christopher Speranzo  
Representative Stephen Kulik  
Representative Dan Bosley  
Commissioner Rick Sullivan, DCR  
Commissioner Mary Griffin, DFG  
Members of the Zebra Mussel Task Force