

## Federal, State, and NGO Agencies Partner on 'Once-in-a-Generation' Cleanup of Boston Harbor Islands

*DCR, Center for Coastal Studies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Boston Harbor Now form Public-Private Partnership to Lead Cleanup of Marine Debris at Five Harbor Islands*



**BOSTON** – In a landmark environmental restoration initiative, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) are leading a historic cleanup of five key islands in the Boston Harbor. This once in a generation project aims to help restore the natural beauty and ecological health of Great Brewster, Middle Brewster, Outer Brewster, Calf, and Lovells Islands.

This effort is the culmination of nearly two years of planning and organizing during which DCR and CCS brought together the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service (NPS), and Boston Harbor Now (BHN) for a historic public-private partnership. These organizations are focused on removing substantial marine debris from the Boston Harbor Islands and ensuring the sustainable disposal of collected waste to help restore critical coastal bird nesting areas and enhanced ecological health of the Islands. This project will also help revitalize recreational areas on the Islands for local residents and visitors and ensure their sustainability for future generations.

“The Boston Harbor Islands are precious natural, cultural and recreational resources that are visited by more than half a million people a year and this historic cleanup represents a major milestone in our collective effort to protect and preserve them for generations to come,” said **DCR Commissioner Brian Arrigo**. “We are proud to lead this transformative effort alongside our dedicated partners by investing additional funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and our DCR operating budget. This initiative reflects our commitment to the environmental health of these islands and our belief in the power of collaboration to drive meaningful change.”

“The Boston Harbor Islands are unique in the Gulf of Maine, located in the backyard of New England's largest city,” said **Laura Ludwig, director of the Center for Coastal Studies' Marine Debris & Plastics Program**. “Our joint effort is not just about cleaning up debris; it’s

about collecting data, finding value in the material where possible, and disposing of all items responsibly. A collaborative approach ensures that our collective expertise and resources are effectively applied for the benefit of wildlife and surrounding communities.”

The cleanup includes several funding sources, including a [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Marine Debris Grant](#) with funding provided by the Inflation Reduction Act. This \$2.7 million grant was awarded to CCS for a multi-year coastal cleanup project, a portion of which will be used for the Boston Harbor Islands cleanup. In addition to the CCS grant funding, DCR is providing \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and an additional \$35,000 from DCR’s operational budget to cover the cost of the commercial vessels and heavy equipment rental to remove and transport industrial debris. USFWS is providing \$80,000 through their Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration program on behalf of the natural resource Trustees for the Bouchard B-120 oil spill to help facilitate the volunteer cleanups including costs of transportation and future monitoring of the project’s benefits to the nesting habitat of coastal bird species. Overall, the funding will support a dedicated federal, state, nonprofit, and volunteer effort to enhance critical wildlife habitats on the islands and address significant environmental concerns.

“This inaugural effort represents a unique opportunity for collaboration across the Commonwealth and NOAA is proud to support this important work,” said **Demi Fox, NOAA Marine Debris Program Northeast Regional Coordinator**. “We look forward to participating in this cleanup with so many dedicated volunteers to assist with removal and data collection, as well as responsible reuse, recycling, and disposal of debris.”

The cleanup will take place over a one-week period from September 13-22. During this time CCS will mobilize 50-70 “Beach Brigade volunteers” - volunteers who have experience and training with CCS in collecting and documenting debris along the state’s coast - for a week-long “adventure cleanup” operating off of Peddocks Island. Working in collaboration with DCR, these volunteers will camp out on the islands for the effort and will deploy daily removal teams across the five islands. BHN, CCS and DCR will also coordinate dozens of volunteers for day-long cleanups before, during, and after the CCS team's residency on the Islands. Additionally, DCR will coordinate the removal of industrial materials from the Islands and the Harbor.

“The National Parks Service is dedicated to preserving the unique landscapes and ecosystems of our national treasures,” said **National Parks of Boston Superintendent Michael Creasey**. “This cleanup underscores our commitment to safeguarding these irreplaceable resources and demonstrates the strength of our partnerships in achieving impactful and sustainable results.”

“Boston Harbor Now is thrilled to contribute to this monumental project,” said **Boston Harbor Now President and CEO Kathy Abbott**. “The collective efforts of our volunteers and partners will leave a lasting mark on the natural health and aesthetics of the Boston Harbor Islands. We are excited to see the positive impact our combined efforts will have on these cherished islands.”

“Marine debris pose a significant threat to wildlife, including seabirds and shorebirds,” said **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Regional Director Wendi Weber**. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proud to be part of this incredible partnership to remove debris from the

Boston Harbor Islands. Through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration program, we seek to address harm to natural resources, such as birds, from oil spills. Removal of trash and marine debris will help restore and enhance important nesting habitat for birds, such as the piping plover and common eider, compensating for impacts to migratory birds from the Bouchard Barge-120 oil spill. Thank you to all of the volunteers taking part in this incredible effort."

The cleanup will address a diverse array of marine debris, including dock, pier, and bridge timbers, skidder tires, lobster traps, ropes, nets, buoys, metal and fiberglass boat pieces, plastic float components, rebar, plastic foam, and other plastic waste. Volunteers will strategically stage debris for removal using barges, cranes, and boats. Efforts will be made to divert debris from landfills by exploring creative reuse options. Items may be repurposed by artists, builders, fishermen, students, and researchers, or delivered to recycling centers specializing in wood, metal, and fishing gear.

For more information about the cleanup effort or to learn how you can get involved, please visit the [Boston Harbor Cleanup website](#).