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A Remarkable Turnaround

Journal Staff

The report released this past weekend by the environmental advocacy group Save the Harbor/Save the Bay (SH/SB) rating the water quality of the beaches in the Metropolitan Boston area once again shows that Massachusetts is a nationwide leader in providing a safe and outstanding recreational resource for its residents.

For those of us who grew up in the Greater Boston area in the period from the 1960s through the 1990s, the SH/SB's annual report card never fails to amaze us.

Boston Harbor had served as the dumping ground for industrial and sewage waste for more than a century and by the 1980s, was on the verge of becoming a "dead zone" both for aquatic life and human activity.

However, in 1986, the state created the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (the MWRA), which undertook the enormous responsibility of cleaning up Boston Harbor and surrounding environs, as well as taking steps to ensure the quality of our drinking water.

For most of us in this area, the MWRA is the government body we love to hate because of our high water and sewer bills. But it is axiomatic that you don't get something for nothing and that it takes money to make money.

The reality is that the MWRA has done a remarkable job in making Boston Harbor one of the cleanest urban waterways in the nation and creating a jewel that has more than paid for itself in terms of job creation and spurring economic growth in this area.

The incredible development in South Boston, East Boston, and Chelsea would not have been possible if Boston Harbor were still the smelly and foul waterway of a generation ago.

Of particular interest to Lynn residents, the improving water quality of King's Beach, which has a six year rating of 85-percent (ranking it 14th of the 15 beaches in the survey from Nantasket in Hull to King's), but which showed a 92-percent rating last year, is extremely heartening.

A rainy summer of 2017 reduced the water quality rating across the metro Boston area, but King's Beach stood out for its year-over-year improvement.

There are so many factors that affect water quality at a beach, both directly and indirectly, that it can be difficult — and extremely costly — to remedy all of them. We would note for example, that even beaches on the South Shore in Cohasset and Scituate (which are not included in the SH/SB report card) are closed after heavy rain events.

The report by SH/SB credits local governments in Lynn and Swampscott for taking measures to improve the water quality at King's Beach in 2017.

Hopefully, that trend will continue this summer and in the years ahead, so that King's Beach will reclaim its standing as one of the premier recreational spots in the entire Boston area and contribute to the economic renaissance that awaits our city.