

Revere Beach lovers lament state of 'America's first public beach'



Many argue the current unsightly condition of Revere Beach is directly related to a lack of proper funding from the state.

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Last weekend one of the state's premier beaches was strewn with seaweed and detritus, recalling an earlier era for North Shore lawmakers who laid the problem at the feet of Gov. Charlie Baker. An administration official said the beach is regularly cleaned and some capital improvements are in the works.

"Over the last year and I believe as a direct result of this Baker administration's 9C cuts, Revere Beach and other beaches along our coast have started to slide backwards sadly," Rep. RoseLee Vincent, a Revere Democrat, said on Monday. "Without proper funding and maintenance and staffing, I see America's first public beach seems to be transforming back to the days of disrepair and apathy."

Revere Beach is the country's first public beach, according to the Revere Beach Partnership, which was formed earlier this century to "save this precious resource" after it had slipped into

decline. Vincent said it is also the most popular beach in the state.

At a Metropolitan Beaches Commission meeting on Monday, Vincent displayed photos she had taken on Friday of Revere Beach, showing thick bands of seaweed on the sand, some trash on the shore and crumbling sea walls.

"This is how America's first public beach looked this weekend with 90-degree weather," Vincent said at the start of the meeting. She said the suboptimal beach conditions were the "direct result of not proper funding."

Using his so-called 9C authority, Baker in December made \$98 million in unilateral spending cuts. Baker cut some funding earmarked for beaches and reduced by \$300,000 the line item for maintaining and operating metropolitan beaches from Lynn and Nahant to Hull.

Environmentalists have pushed for Baker to make good on his campaign promise of eventually devoting 1 percent of the state's roughly \$40 billion budget to environmental programs, but state finances have been buffeted the past three years by revenue shortfalls and MassHealth spending demands.

Beaches are pounded by surf during storms and seaweed and driftwood wash up on the sand. Vincent acknowledged that seaweed piles up on beaches naturally, but she said the state should rake it up. She said that between areas cordoned off for piping plovers and stretches of sand covered in seaweed, the large crowds at Revere Beach last weekend were all packed together on the remaining sandy parts.

According to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), maintenance at Revere Beach State Reservation includes regular removal of seaweed and other debris, emptying of trash barrels and litter removal. Starting this fall, a new maintenance yard and public restrooms will be built next to the State Police barracks at the beach, according to the state.

"The Department of Conservation and Recreation continues to work diligently to ensure the Commonwealth's state managed beaches are prepared and ready for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who utilize them every year, including at Revere Beach State Reservation, where over \$600,000 has been invested in new cleaning equipment, planting and landscape improvements, and a new labor and maintenance yard," said spokesman Troy Wall.

Vincent's complaints were echoed by Sen. Tom McGee, a Lynn Democrat who is running for mayor this year.

"We're losing sight of what makes this Commonwealth a great place to live," said McGee, who was previously chairman of the Democratic State Committee. He said, "We need

to step back and say, 'What do we really want state government to do?'"

McGee said Vincent's photos are "troubling," and said, "We're heading back to a place that was really problematic."

Valerie Moscatelli called the News Service on Monday afternoon, hoping to reach someone at the State House to complain about the state of Revere Beach.

"People don't even want to go in the water," said Moscatelli, who lives near Revere Beach and called it covered in seaweed. She said, "It's disgusting."

A Republican who lives next to Lynn in Swampscott, Baker is McGee's constituent and in his first year in office he jokingly recalled greeting McGee when the Lynn Democrat was heading up the party during the campaign.

"Good to see you, senator," Baker said he would say. "Thanks for the kick in the teeth."

Robert Tucker, of the Friends of Lynn-Nahant Beach, said the non-profit has stepped in where state assistance has come up short, such as providing bags for people to clean up after their dogs, but the state needs to make improvements to beach infrastructure.

"We're going to buy a thousand doggie bags, take it out of our membership dues," Tucker said. He said, "The state and DCR and this administration in particular cannot expect friends groups in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to go in their pockets and to fund the infrastructure and to fund improvements on these beaches that are owned by the state, operated by the state and are the responsibility of the DCR and the administration."

Tucker, who said he is angry and "upset" about the situation, said funding has been "drastically reduced" since the Baker administration took over in 2015.