

# WINTHROP

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## Residents Give it to DCR Over Winthrop Beach State

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Sue Ellen Woodcock

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A meeting with representatives of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on Tuesday night was emotional and fueled by the inaccuracies given to the town in the past couple of years.

The majority of residents who attended the meeting at the DeLeo Senior Center haven't been laying around on the beach yet this year, but they are certainly feeling the burn from the DCR over the condition of Winthrop Beach.

For at least the third time DCR officials came into explain what happened to the beach. This time the DCR brought in an outside engineering firm TetraTech to do a peer review of the project.

"People had a vision of Myrtle Beach, and this did not happen," said Robert Daylor, TetraTech Senior Vice President. "This project has saved homeowners a lot of aggravation. They fixed the problem of storm surges."

Conservation Commission member Norm Hyett, who also lives on Winthrop Shore Drive, said the project was never called a "protection" project. He recalls it being for recreation.

Daylor showed slides of other beaches in the state that have cobbles and sand. But he admitted the stones were there naturally. Many at the meeting said the sand was filling in the "sisters" (the stone breakers) and sand was migrating to Yirrell Beach because the natural current runs from north to south.

"We were shown a pristine natural beach and that's never going to happen," said resident Mary Alice Sharkey.

"I can't begin to express my disappointment," said Town Manager James McKenna, citing discussions with former Gov. Duval Patrick, officials from the Executive Affairs Department and DCR. "It was supposed to be a wonderful recreational area included in storm protection. I'm the one who said, 'conservation and recreation'. This is an enormous step backwards. I urge you to reconsider that this job is as good as it gets."

"I was there at the ribbon cutting. Were the original people incompetent or did they lie," said former Town Council President Peter Gill.

No one answered.

Now that the water at Winthrop Beach has been given a top-notch rating by Save the Harbor residents are expecting that the DCR will step up and make the beach look better.

Tuesday night DCR Commissioner Leo Roy, appointed to the position last December, said he wasn't there for the ribbon cutting of the project, that he was told to take a look at the project and see if there was something DCR could fix. There will be an upcoming survey of the area this month.

"We will explore the options and see what can be accomplished," Roy said.

The DCR began the Winthrop Beach Renourishment Project in 2012. It was meant to stem the impact of the waves going over the seawall and flooding area streets and homes. Three phases of the work have been completed. But Winthrop was left with cobbles (stones) on much of the beach and in the sandy middle area much of the area if roped off to protect nesting piping plovers. During the construction cobbles from Lexington and Carver were trucked in. Over 280,000 tons of sand from the Residents Give it to DCR Over Winthrop Beach State Rumney Marsh in Saugus was also trucked in. The two combined are to work together to reduce the impact of northeasterly storms, but much of the sand has migrated south and the cobbles piled high toward the north end. In recent weeks DCR has used a trucks to even out the cobbles.

"Why would you truck in 280,000 tons of sand if you knew it wouldn't last," said Steve Calla, head of Winthrop's DPW.

The fourth phase includes full-width reconstruction of Winthrop Shore Drive, including widened handicapped-accessible sidewalks; installation of visitor amenities such as benches, bicycle racks, and shower towers at primary beach entryways; repairs to sea wall railings; and upgrades to the storm water drainage system. The work is supposed to be completed by the fall.

During the meeting some questioned what the maintenance plan for the beach would be in the future.

"We're concerned about what happens next," said Bruce Berman of Save the Harbor. "I think this is the largest project in the state where shore protection is working."

Another meeting regarding the beach will take place June 21 at the senior center.