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PRESS RELEASE

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Gobi Pushes Back Against Outdoor Restrictions

BOSTON- As we attempt to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic in the Commonwealth, many are turning to the outdoors and natural pastimes for a source of relief, comfort or normalcy. In cooperation with social distancing guidelines these activities can take place in a relatively safe manner, and some may argue the need to retain some outlets are necessary for the good of the people, the preservation of their sanity.

In an abundance of caution however, there have been several actions taken by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) that have overstepped these guidelines. These include closures to the roadway at the Quabbin State Park and a lock placed on the Quabbin Park Cemetery, denying access to both the general public who may wish to use the trails and family members who want to visit their deceased loved ones during this time when so many are thinking about their own mortality. Several area reservoirs remain closed for fishing, and boat fishing at the Quabbin has been postponed as well, all places that the general public could usually turn to when they wish to practice social distancing outside of the pandemic. This appears hypocritical in light of other DCR operated facilities, as well as facilities operated by other state agencies, being open to public access, including fishing opportunities.

While we appreciate jurisdictional/administrative discretion when it comes to executing policy, these moves on the part of the DCR are not in keeping with the Baker-Polito Administration's guidance to the public, and could increase the danger for those seeking to get outdoors as crowding increases at the locations that remain open while others close. The closing of the cemetery is additionally troubling at this monumental time period; a sign of irreverence to those interred within the grounds and one with very limited benefit.

Due to their nature as part of the public drinking water supply, public access to these reservoirs are limited. This includes both shore fishing and boat fishing. During this time of people working from home, and limiting their interactions, fishing is an outlet for many in our state. And while we could understand limiting on-shore fishing, those using boats are naturally predisposed to social distancing.

It is our intent to keep the residents of our districts and the Commonwealth safe during this pandemic, but reducing outdoor recreation and barring residents from burial grounds at this time is not a wise decision, and one we hope to see addressed in the very near future.

For more information, please contact my office at (617) 722-1540.

Anne Gobi
State Senator

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