PROJECT PROPOSAL - Parking Lot

TO: Amesbury Conservation Commission

FROM: Bob Brisebois, Amesbury Outdoors and Deer Island Planning Group

DATE: May 27, 2026

SUBJECT: Deer Island Parking Lot Improvement and Ecological Restoration Project

1. Executive Summary

This proposal outlines necessary infrastructure repairs, accessibility improvements, and ecological restoration of the Deer Island parking lot area. The goal of this project is to stabilize eroded areas, enhance visitor safety, improve access to educational signage, and remove aggressive invasive plant species. All proposed work will be conducted with minimal impact on the surrounding resource areas.

2. Statement of Need

Deer Island is a heavily utilized public resource in Amesbury. Over time, environmental weathering and high foot traffic have degraded the parking lot infrastructure, allowing invasive species to compromise the native ecosystem. Addressing these issues now will prevent further shoreline erosion, protect public safety, and ensure compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act by promoting a healthier riparian buffer.

3. Scope of Work

A. Shoreline and Parking Lot Stabilization

- Issue: Severe erosion on the northeast section of the parking lot due to stormwater runoff.
- Proposed Solution: Install localized riprap or bio-engineered coir logs along the degraded edge to dissipate energy from runoff. Backfill the eroded section with crushed stone and compact the surface to match the existing parking lot grade. Implement temporary erosion control blankets until the upper slope is stabilized.
- Joe Buckley….

B. Guardrail Replacement

- Issue: The existing guardrails are degraded, structurally compromised, and visually unappealing.
- Proposed Solution: Remove and properly dispose of the old guardrails. Install new, durable timber-frame guardrails along the parking perimeter to ensure both vehicular and pedestrian safety, while maintaining a natural aesthetic that is suitable for the conservation area.
- Guardrail Removal & Replacement: $6,926.00, to be executed by Atlantic Coast Fence Company, Inc. (Amesbury, MA).

C. Interpretive Board Access and Trail Creation

- Issue: Lack of formal, stable pathways leading from the main information kiosk to the interpretive boards located on either side of the park entrance.
- Proposed Solution:
    - On the north side, clear and grade low-impact walking paths along the outside of the parking lot from the kiosk to the interpretive board.
    - On the south side, narrow the existing path to encourage natural growth on both sides of the path
    - Construct a 6'x6' flat, stable viewing surface (using compacted stone dust or pervious pavers) at each interpretive board location.
    - Ensure these pads provide level standing areas that improve safety and accessibility for visitors reading the educational materials.

D. Invasive Species Mitigation and Native Revegetation

- Issue: A large infestation of Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) on the north side of the parking lot is choking out native canopy trees and understory vegetation.
- Proposed Solution:
    - Removal: Implement a targeted invasive removal plan. Cut mature bittersweet vines at the base and carefully pull smaller roots where feasible without causing major soil disruption. Dispose of all invasive biomass off-site according to local conservation guidelines.
    - Revegetation: To prevent the re-establishment of bittersweet in this sunny, dry area, the cleared zone will be immediately stabilized and replanted with a resilient mix of native species:
        - *Shrubs for Erosion Control:* Plant Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) and Northern Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) to establish deep root systems that bind the soil and form a dense, weed-suppressing understory.
        - *Herbaceous Layer:* Introduce Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) to quickly fill open space, compete against weed seeds, and provide high-value pollinator habitat.
        - *Edge Trees:* Install Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) to re-establish a healthy native canopy border.

4. Environmental Impact and Mitigation Measures

To protect the sensitive habitat of Deer Island, the project will adhere to the following strict environmental controls:

- Sedimentation Control: Silt fences and straw wattles will be installed downslope of all work areas before any earth-moving activities.
- Equipment Use: Heavy machinery will be restricted to the existing gravel parking lot surface to prevent soil compaction in the vegetated buffer zones.
- Timing: Work will be scheduled during dry weather windows to minimize muddy runoff and soil disturbance.

5. Next Steps

We request a hearing with the Amesbury Conservation Commission to review this proposal, determine the appropriate filing pathway (e.g., Notice of Intent or Request for Determination of Applicability), and refine the project timeline based on commission feedback.
