



## **MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA**

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**For Immediate Release - July 25, 2024**

# **Northampton Closes Connecticut River Greenway Conservation Area to Protect Public Health and Safety and to Safeguard the Environment**

NORTHAMPTON – Today, by order of Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra and multiple city departments, the City of Northampton has closed the Connecticut River Greenway Conservation Area at Damon Road to all public uses until further notice. This decision, involving Massachusetts Public Health laws, addresses the significant accumulation of trash and human waste resulting from illegal activities in this conservation area, posing serious risks to public health and environmental integrity.

The adjacent boat ramp and parking area remain open exclusively for launching non-motorized craft. Unauthorized use of the closed area will result in a \$1,000 fine and possible further penalties.

Since 2021, the city has worked to enforce responsible use of the park following the unexpected formation of a sandy peninsula due to a natural deposit of soft sand near the boat launch. Despite multiple efforts to promote lawful and gentle use of the area, the site has continued to face challenges, particularly during recent heat waves. The closure is needed for public health and environmental preservation.

The site has presented numerous enforcement challenges, such as motorized boat access, alcohol sales and consumption, fires, illegal dumping, littering, unpermitted gatherings, and improper disposal of human and animal waste, all of which are prohibited. The area is not a designated recreational swimming site, lacks lifeguards, and is posted as a “No Swimming” zone. The city has consistently raised concerns about the deep water, strong currents, and the hazards posed by boating traffic. Additionally, water quality is not monitored due to the area’s non-recreational status.

The city remains committed to protecting this valuable natural resource and will rigorously enforce the closure. We continue to extend our gratitude to the residents of River Run apartments and Northampton Community Rowing for their voluntary cleanup efforts over the past few years. Their contributions are invaluable in maintaining the park.

We are dedicated to finding solutions that will allow safe and responsible use of this area in the future, ensuring it remains a clean, pleasant, and environmentally protected space for all community members. For those looking for a designated local swimming area, Musante Beach in Leeds is available to residents and non-residents.

For more information, please contact the Mayor's Office at (413) 587-1249 or [mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov).