



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Bureau of Planning, Design & Resource Protection  
Resource Management Planning Program

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

# Blue Hills Complex

*Including Blue Hills Reservation, Cutler Park Reservation, Wilson Mountain Reservation, Neponset River Reservation (in part), F. Gilbert Hills State Forest, Bristol Blake State Reservation, Franklin State Forest, Wrentham State Forest, Rehoboth State Forest, West Bridgewater State Forest, Bridgewater State Forest, and Borderland State Park*







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## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

2017

Charles D. Baker, Governor  
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor  
Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary  
Leo Roy, Commissioner

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. Led by Commissioner Leo Roy, the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about the DCR, our facilities, and our programs please visit us [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr). Contact us at [mass.parks@state.ma.us](mailto:mass.parks@state.ma.us).



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) are working documents that provide a guide to the short- and long-term management of properties under the stewardship of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). They include an inventory and assessment of natural, cultural, and recreational resources; identify unique characteristics and values of a property; analyze complex resource protection and recreation issues; and develop clear management recommendations. They guide the management of DCR's properties by setting priorities, targeting capital and operational resources, protecting sensitive resources, and improving communication and cooperation with park visitors and the surrounding communities.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation is directed by legislative mandate (M.G.L. Chapter 21: Section 2F) to prepare management plans for "all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department." Although the mandate does not specify the format or content of these management plans, it does require that:

*"Said management plans shall include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of the aforementioned reservations, parks and forests, shall provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources and shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management."*

The legislative mandate also establishes two other requirements. First, that the DCR "shall seek and consider public input in the development of management plans, and shall make draft plans available for a public review and comment period through notice in the Environmental Monitor." Second, management plans must be reviewed and adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council, a thirteen-member citizen oversight entity. Within 30 days of adoption, the Commissioner "...shall file a copy of such management plans as adopted by the council" with the Secretary of State and the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

This plan covers the Blue Hills Complex.

## THE BLUE HILLS COMPLEX

The Blue Hills Complex includes DCR properties in an area largely defined by Routes 95, 495, and 24. It includes state parks, forests, and reservations; other DCR-owned properties; and properties on which the DCR holds a legal interest.

The following 12 parks, and their associated properties, are included in the Blue Hills Complex:

- Blue Hills Reservation (Blue Hills)
- Cutler Park Reservation
- Wilson Mountain Reservation
- Neponset River Reservation (in part; upstream of Paul's Bridge only)
- F. Gilbert Hills State Forest, including Barton State Park
- Bristol Blake State Reservation
- Franklin State Forest
- Wrentham State Forest
- Rehoboth State Forest
- West Bridgewater State Forest
- Bridgewater State Forest
- Borderland State Park

The DCR also owns the following real properties in the Complex; not all are managed by the DCR:

- Blue Hills and Furnace Brook parkways (in part)
- Skating rinks (4)
- Swimming pools (2)
- Angle Tree Monument Reservation
- Town Brook Flood Control Site
- Fire Observation Towers (2) and one associated parcel of land.

In addition to these real assets, the DCR holds conservation restrictions on seven properties (398.94 acres, total). It also has a regulatory interest in five Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) that are entirely, or partially, located within the Complex.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING THIS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Notice of a public meeting and of the DCR's intent to prepare an RMP for the Blue Hills Complex was published in the October 19, 2015 Environmental Monitor (Volume 84, Issue 12). Notices were also posted at the Complex's parks and e-mailed to approximately 950 stakeholders. An initial public meeting was convened at the Blue Hills Trailside Museum, Milton on October 28, 2015. Approximately 28 people attended this meeting, which ran from 7:00 to 8:30 P.M.

The initial public comment period ran from October 29, 2015 through November 27, 2015; 14 sets of written comments were received.

Notice of a public meeting on the draft RMP for the Blue Hills Complex, and of the availability of the plan, was published in the October 24, 2016 Environmental Monitor (Volume 86, Issue 12). Meeting notices were also posted at the Complex's parks and mailed to stakeholders. The meeting was held on November 10, 2016 at the Sharon Public Library; 28 people attended.

The public comment period on the draft RMP ran from November 11 through December 12, 2016; 5 sets of written comments were received, including those from the Massachusetts Historical Commission and MassWildlife.

Additional information on the public process for this RMP is provided in Appendix B (Public Participation).

This Resource Management Plan was submitted to the DCR's Stewardship Council on March 3, 2017, and was adopted by the council on April 12, 2017.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Ninety-one priority management recommendations were developed for the Complex in its entirety, individual parks within the Complex, and associated properties. Thirty of these were previously included in a previous RMP and meet current prioritization criteria (DCR 2011). Three recommendations apply to all properties in the Complex, and four others apply to more than one property.

For a recommendation to be considered priority it must address one or more of the following criteria:

- Regulatory compliance or compliance with legal agreements.
- Health and safety of park visitors and employees.
- Imminent pending loss of a natural, cultural, or recreation resource.

Priority recommendations are summarized in Table ES-1.



**Table ES.1. Summary of management recommendations for the Blue Hills Complex.**

Recommendation	Complex	Blue Hills	Cutler Park	Wilson Mountain	Neponset River	F. G. Hills	Bristol Blake	Franklin	Wrentham	Rehoboth	West Bridgewater	Bridgewater	Borderland
Conduct regular monitoring of properties in which the DCR has a legal interest (i.e., conservation restriction, easement) for consistency with agreements.	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brief field operations personnel about their role in dam maintenance, and develop and implement a systematic, Complex-wide approach to dam maintenance to be performed by the Field Operations Team.	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contact the Office of Cultural Resources before starting any project beyond those described in the BMPs that may impact cultural resources identified in this RMP.	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reduce trail user conflicts by: developing and distributing trail etiquette literature; posting trail etiquette “Yield” signs at kiosks, bulletin boards, and key locations along trails; revising future trail maps to include information on trail etiquette; and working with the DCR Mounted Unit and partners to offer training in trail etiquette. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase ranger presence on trails to promote enhanced compliance with trail regulations. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with MassDOT, and other transportation planning entities, to reduce through and commuter traffic in the reservation. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Using new traffic count data, conduct an assessment of pedestrian safety. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with the Massachusetts State Police to develop a speed enforcement plan. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Install “Share the Road” and bicycle vehicular traffic warning signs on internal park roads and parkways to increase driver awareness of the presence of cyclists. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Advocate that MassDOT install a left-hand turn lane on Route 138 south for vehicles to enter the Trailside Museum south parking lot. Request that MassDOT perform a safety study and warrant analysis for a left-hand turn lane from Route 138 south into the Trailside Museum south parking lot. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Have a structural engineer inspect the foundation of the ski area’s main lodge and make recommendations for its maintenance, repair, or replacement. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
[Note: the option to replace the ski lodge has been added to this recommendation.]													
Work with the ski area operator to ensure that all portions of the ski slopes have an “erosion-protective cover of vegetation.” <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Modify signs and striping at the Trailside Museum north and south parking lots to ensure compliance with accessible parking requirements. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table ES.1. Summary of management recommendations for the Blue Hills Complex.**

Recommendation	Complex	Blue Hills	Cutler Park	Wilson Mountain	Neponset River	F. G. Hills	Bristol Blake	Franklin	Wrentham	Rehoboth	West Bridgewater	Bridgewater	Borderland
Replace the Great Blue Hill pump house roof's sheathing and shingles. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Make a portion of Picnic Site 4 accessible by installing accessible grills and picnic tables, and creating a hardened path to nearby accessible parking. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Modify signs and striping at the main Houghton's Pond and Site 5 parking lots to ensure compliance with accessible parking requirements. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Establish a safe pedestrian connection between Houghton's Pond and Brookwood Farm by improving the intersection of Hillside Street and Blue Hill River Road in Milton. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investigate the potential septic system connection at the Police Station. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Modify signs and striping at the Ulin Rink parking lot to ensure compliance with accessible parking requirements. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Complete the mothballing of the Randolph Avenue Stable by ensuring that all openings are properly sealed and there is adequate ventilation. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Evaluate locations of trails relative to the dens of state-listed snakes and reroute or close trail segments, as necessary, in accordance with <i>Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual</i> (DCR 2010a). <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
[Note: This manual was updated in October 2014.]													
Improve the crosswalk at the Chickatawbut Overlook. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reinstitute seasonal nighttime closings of Chickatawbut Road, east of Route 28, and Wampatuck Road; as recommended by the NHESP (2007a). <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Develop and implement vista clearing protocols for the Chickatawbut Overlook viewshed. This recommendation may be implemented in advance of the VMP. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Develop and implement vegetation maintenance protocols for the Chickatawbut Observation Tower, Chickatawbut Pavilion, and picnic area. This recommendation may be implemented in advance of the VMP. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Exclude all non-emergency vehicles, except in exigent situations, and non-utility company motor vehicles from trails in rare snake habitat east of Route 28. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
[Note: In the 2011 RMP, this recommendation was made three times, once for the Buck Hill, Chickatawbut, and St. Moritz sections.]													
Plan landscaping, maintenance, and construction to avoid impacts to rare snakes; as recommended by the NHESP (2007a). <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stabilize and mothball the Granite Rail Quarry compressor house. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table ES.1. Summary of management recommendations for the Blue Hills Complex.**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Complex</b>	<b>Blue Hills</b>	<b>Cutler Park</b>	<b>Wilson Mountain</b>	<b>Neponset River</b>	<b>F. G. Hills</b>	<b>Bristol Blake</b>	<b>Franklin</b>	<b>Wrentham</b>	<b>Rehoboth</b>	<b>West Bridgewater</b>	<b>Bridgewater</b>	<b>Borderland</b>
Modify signs and striping at the Shea Rink parking lot to ensure compliance with accessible parking requirements. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Install a memorial marker at the Sergeant Robert Allen Curry Ball Field. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with the AMC Ponkapoag Camp to bring the camp into compliance with State Sanitary Code. <sup>a</sup>	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with the Canton and Randolph Boards of Health, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to ensure that Public Health Fish Consumption Advisory signs are posted at Ponkapoag Dam, Fisherman’s Beach, AMC Ponkapoag Camp, and the entrance to the Ponkapoag Boardwalk.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Promote the regeneration of native forests by decreasing deer populations to the recommended density of 6 to 18 deer/mi <sup>2</sup> of forest, through regulated hunting, in order to reduce deer browse.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implement the eight life safety and nine near-term asset protection recommendations for the Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory as identified in DCR and Turowski2 Architecture, Inc. (2015).	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implement the eight life safety recommendations for the Eliot Bridge and Pavilion as identified in DCR and Turowski2 Architecture, Inc. (2015).	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
[Note: This supersedes the recommendation in the 2011 RMP to “Replace the Great Blue Hill Observation Tower and Eliot Pavilion’s roof and repair damaged masonry.”]													
Roof and side the Gate Keeper’s Cottage at Brookwood Farm so that water does not penetrate the building envelope.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implement structural repairs to the east wall of the Brian T. Broderick Stables.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Remove flammable (e.g., gasoline) and combustible (e.g., motor oil, two-stroke oil) materials from storage locations in historic buildings; identify alternate storage location(s) that meet all relevant safety codes. Remove power equipment from all historic buildings not intended for this use.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct a carrying capacity study for the Houghton’s Pond Recreation Area.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with Brookwood Community Farm to ensure consistency with the terms of their Special Use Permit.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with MassDOT to establish a signalized crosswalk across Route 138 for use by trail users and for park visitors seeking to safely access the Route 138 Park and Ride lot from the ski area and Trailside Museum.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with MassDOT to identify which trail crossing locations along Route 28 are appropriate for the installation of mid-block crosswalks. Install crosswalk lines, signs, and pedestrian actuated signal devices as appropriate.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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Install Color Core signs at trail intersections along both sides of Route 28 that direct trail users to locations of crosswalks associated with trail crossings or the signalized crosswalk at Route 28 and Chickatawbut Road, and recommend that these crosswalks be used during periods of heavy traffic volume.	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with local Boards of Health and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to ensure that Fish Consumption Health Advisory signs are posted at major fishing access points at Cutler Park, Charles River Reservation, and Kehoe Park.	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Repair damage to mothballing of Newton Water Works pump house.	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with commercial pet walkers to obtain the required permit for their commercial activity at Cutler Park. [Note: Similar recommendations were made for Wilson Mountain, Fowl Meadow, and Borderland.]	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Survey boundary of Cutler Park, along Rosemary Road, Dedham, to determine if encroachments have occurred; resolve as warranted.	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Actively promote awareness of, and compliance with, DCR regulation that require animals (e.g., dogs) to be “on a tether or leash no greater in length than 10 feet.” (302 CMR 12.13(2)).	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Meet with representatives of The Trustees of Reservations to clarify status of the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement and, if appropriate, develop a work plan for future stewardship activities.	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct annual reviews of the Rare and Endangered Species Habitat Management Plan for Fowl Meadow; update as needed and implement.	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conduct active habitat management for rare plants at Fowl Meadow, as recommended in NHESP (2007).	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GPS official trails, update maps, and make information publically available on the DCR web page.	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Survey boundary of Farnham & Connolly along Culloden Drive, Canton to determine if encroachments have occurred; resolve any encroachments with abutters.	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Determine if the MBTA has a legal right to cross Farnham & Connolly to access their property from Culloden Drive.	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with MBTA to gate northern spur of Culloden Drive, Canton, to stop illegal vehicle entry into park.	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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Address deficiencies to the Sunset Lake Dam as identified in Fuss & O’Neill (2011).	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Update bathrooms to meet current accessibility standards.	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Create one accessible parking space, with proper markings, signs, aisles, and curb cuts at the east side of the Operations Garage and a second at the front of the Forest Headquarters.	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Create an accessible pathway to connect the Men’s and Women’s bathrooms to the newly created accessible parking space at the Operations Garage.	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Implement recommendations identified in <i>Rapid Assessment and Trail System Recommendations</i> (DCR 20015).	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-
Establish an updated agreement with the King Philip Trail Riders for the use of off-road vehicles in F. Gilbert Hills, Franklin, and Wrentham State Forests.	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	-
Establish an agreement with the New England Mountain Bike Association to cover their special events and trail maintenance and repair activities.	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Address dam deficiencies, as identified in GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. (2012a).	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Replace the existing boardwalk between Teal Marsh and Kingfisher Pond.	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Work with Mass Audubon to control poison ivy in portions on the Reservation in the immediate vicinity of the Nature Center, Sensory Trail, and Nature Play Area.	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Install a gate on the fire and service road opposite 81 North Street, in accordance with the terms of the 2011 MOU.	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reopen main forest roads/trails to emergency vehicles by clearing brush and repairing heavily eroded areas.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-
Request that MassDOT replace fencing along I-495 to prevent recreationists from passing from the forest into the highway right of way.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Contact abutter along Beach Street, Wrentham regarding establishing an agreement to ensure continued hiker access along the 550-foot long segment of the Warner Trail that passes through their property.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Cover the Jones House Site’s well in accordance with Archaeological Features BMP.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
Stabilize the east wall of the Jones House Site’s cellar hole to prevent further collapse.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-

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Address dam deficiencies, as identified in GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. (2012b).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Create barricades across the upstream and downstream slopes of the dam in a manner that prohibits OHV access while allowing for ongoing vegetation management.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Gate or otherwise block access points to stop illegal access by four-wheel drive vehicles and OHVs.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Conduct deed research to determine if the deeded right of way held by abutters at 0 Stoney Road includes parcels within the forest.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Work with commercial photographers to obtain the required permit for their commercial activity.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Develop and implement guidance on management activities for all dams and dikes in the park, in order to preserve the ponds as historic landscape features.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Assess Potential Vernal Pools and submit paperwork to NHESP for all pools meeting certification criteria. Examine trail segments near Certified Vernal Pools; relocate heavily used trail segments 50 or more feet from pools in accordance with guidance in NHESP (2015a).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Provide ongoing maintenance, security, and oversight of activities at the Ames Mansion; maintain the associated historic landscape in accordance with the landscape rehabilitation plan (DCR 2011b).	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Establish a new agricultural concession to provide for the continued mowing of agricultural fields in order to preserve the Smith Farm’s cultural landscape.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Establish formal legal agreements with the park’s three major partners: Friends of Borderland; Friends of Borderland Disc Golf; and the New England Mountain Bike Association.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Work with MassWildlife to assess the white-tailed deer population and ascertain its impacts on the Park’s natural and cultural resources; discuss deer management options if warranted.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Require all new trail projects, including disc golf paths, to undergo review and approval using the DCR Trail Proposal and Evaluation Form, and all trail maintenance activities to be reviewed for compliance under MESA and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X

a. These recommendations were originally made in the 2011 RMP for the Blue Hills Planning Unit; they meet current prioritization criteria and are included as recommendations in this RMP.