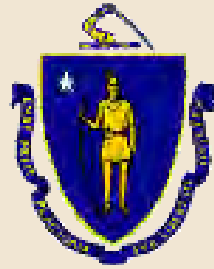


Middlesex Fells Reservation Draft Resource Management Plan



Public Meeting

September 14, 2011; 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
McGlynn Middle School, Medford



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor

Deval L. Patrick

Lieutenant Governor

Timothy Murray

Energy and Environmental Secretary

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner

Edward M. Lambert, Jr.

DCR Mission Statement



Spot Pond, DCR Archives

To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources.

Tonight's Presentation



Columbine, Bryan Hamlin

- Preview of Draft Middlesex Fells Resource Management Plan
 - Content and Format
 - Management Principle and Goals
 - Major Findings
 - Draft Recommendations
- Public Comments

RMP Schedule



Hikers on the Skyline Trail, Jack Boudreau

January 2011

Initial Public Meeting

February –
March 2011

Public Workshop Series

September 14, 2011

Preview of Draft Plan
and Release for 60 Day
Public Comment Period

November 2011

Revise RMP in Response
to Public Comments

December 2011

Submit Final RMP to DCR
Stewardship Council for its
Review and Approval

RMP Requirements



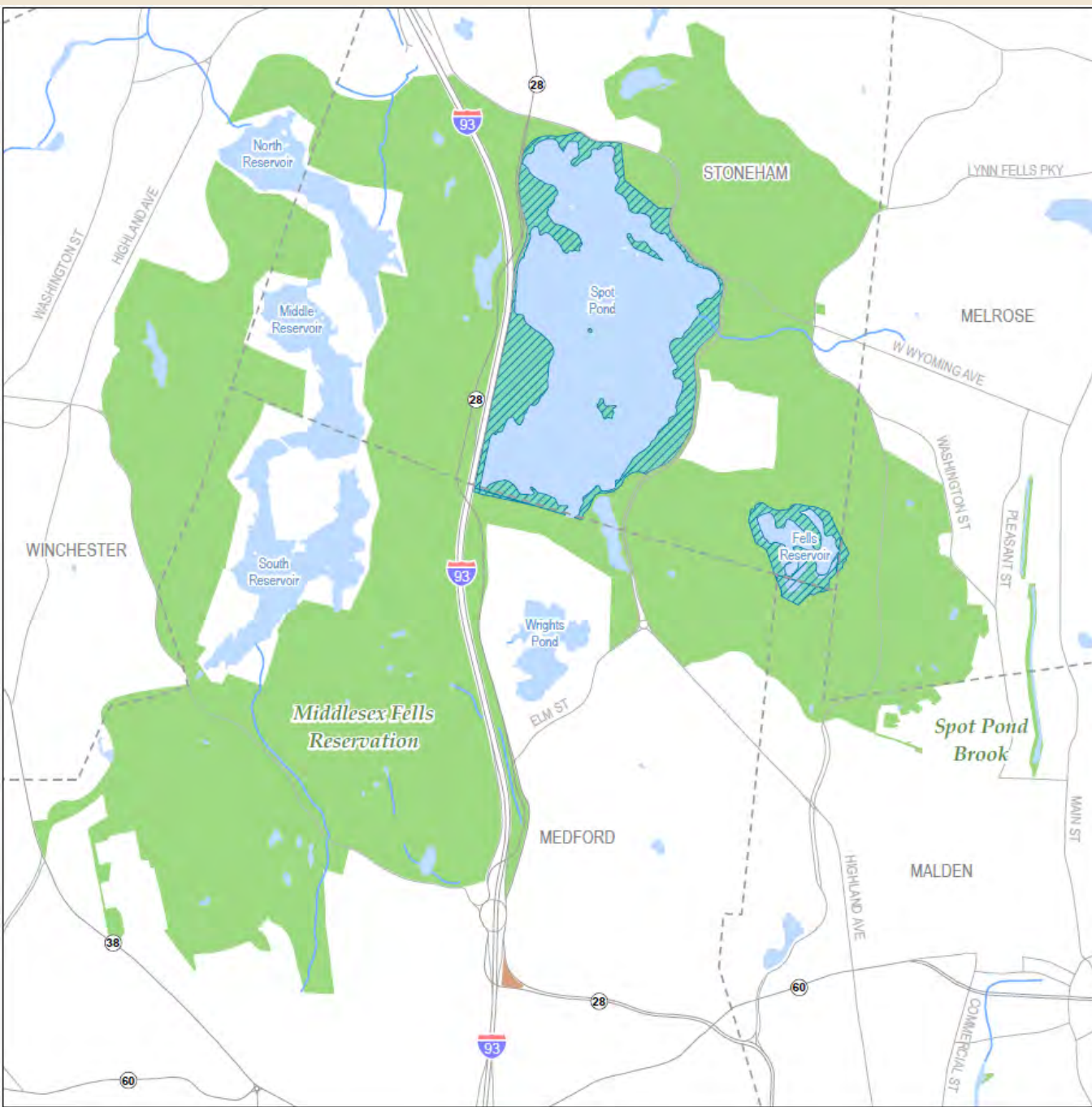
Botume House, DCR archives

“shall include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of...reservations, parks and forests”

“shall provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources”

“shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection and sustainable forest management”

Areas Included in Middlesex Fells Reservation Planning Unit



- Major Road
- Minor Road
- Town Boundary
- Perennial Stream
- Open Water
- Other Legal Interest (MWRA)
- DCR (Urban Parks and Recreation)
- DCR (Water Supply Protection)
- MassDOT (DCR Care and Control)

0 0.5 1 Mile

Geographic data provided by the Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS).

Format of Middlesex Fells RMP



The Cascades, Bryan Hamlin

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Existing Conditions
- Management Resources and Practices
- Issues Discussion
- Management Recommendations
- Appendices

Management Principle

“Through the creative use of state management resources, partnerships and volunteer stewardship; protect the cultural and ecological resources at the Middlesex Fells Reservation and provide diverse recreational opportunities that are compatible with resource protection.”



Reservoir trail, Paul Jahnige



Orange swallow moth, Mike Nelson

Goal: Protect water resources

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- 12% of the reservation (325 acres) are surface water
- Spot Pond and Fells Reservoir are back-up MWRA water supply
- 223 acres of the reservation are Zone A for three Winchester drinking water reservoirs
- 129 vernal pools
- 145 acres of wetland resources



Fells Reservoir, MWRA

Protect water resources: Draft Recommendations

- Close Trails:
 - Leading to water supply lands
 - Impacting vernal pools and wetland resource areas
- Enforce “no trespassing” on posted water supply lands
- Coordinate with MWRA and town of Winchester to protect water supply and infrastructure



Fells Reservoir, DCR



Water Supply Lands, Town of Winchester

Goal: Protect and enhance habitats for rare species, natural communities, and native plants and animals.



Ridgetop Pitch Pine Scrub Oak Community, Paul Jahnige

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- 9 rare species
- 10 occurrences of 5 Priority Natural Communities
- One newly described Priority Natural Community
- 862 plant species, 560 native plants, 84 uncommon for the region
- 183 bird species, including 27 species in need of conservation
- 21 mammal species, 7 reptiles and 10 amphibians confirmed at the Fells

Protect and enhance habitats...

Draft Recommendations

- Close redundant, confusing, fall-line and poor-condition trails
- Maintain large trail-free areas as trail-free
- Enforce prohibition on off-trail recreation (unless permitted)
- Monitor rare species



Wild geranium, Paul Jahnige



Hentz's redbelly tiger beetle, NHESP

Goal: Preserve the cultural resources of
the reservation

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- 6 recorded pre-contact archaeological sites
- Historic archaeological resources including Spot Pond Brook District
- 47 historic buildings and structures
- Cultural landscapes including the Sheepfold, Bellevue Pond and the Reservoir System



Pre-contact archaeological finds, DCR

Preserve the cultural resources: Draft Recommendations

- Conduct further archaeological survey and structural assessment, and create a Cultural Resources Protection Plan
- Avoid / monitor any disturbance of level and well-drained areas around ponds and wetlands
- Consider One Woodland Rd for Historic Curatorship



Haywardville, archives



Spot Pond Brook, Friends of the Fells

Goal: Provide Diverse Opportunities for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation



Young mountain bikers, GB-NEMBA

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- 122 miles of trail
- 22 miles of un-authorized, user-created trails
- Heavy recreational trail use by hikers, mountain bikers, dog-walkers, runners, skiers and others
- Skating at the Flynn Rink
- Swimming at the Hall Pool
- Boating at Spot Pond Boating

Provide diverse recreation: Draft Recommendations

- Develop all-persons accessible trail opportunities
- Renovate the Sheepfold parking lots to improve and control access, parking, plowing and storm water drainage
- Improve trail signage and marking following DCR guidelines
- Develop and distribute new DCR trail maps to improve the experience for all users



Trail signage, DCR



Three loop trails together, Paul Jahnige

Goal: Enhance compliance with rules and regulations to protect resources and enhance recreational experiences

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- Culture of non-compliance at the reservation
 - Off-leash dogs
 - Off-trail recreation
 - Trespassing on posted lands
 - Biking on pedestrian only trails
- Contributes to conflict among users
- Trail system design contributes
- Lack of enforcement presence
- Cooperation with / among stakeholder



Camping, litter and fires, Mike Nelson

Enhance compliance: Draft Recommendations

- Communicate regulations appropriate behaviors and etiquette
- Increase DCR ranger presence at trailheads and on trails
- Enforce all regulations
- Bring additional enforcement resources as necessary and available
- Initiate ParkWatch Program
- Implement a compliance monitoring protocol with benchmarks



Enforcement on Spot Pond, Mike Nelson



ParkWatch, DCR

Goal: Interpret the natural and cultural resources of the Fells



Virginia Wood historic trail, DCR

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- Rangers and staff provide some education and interpretation
- Many partner organizations provide numerous educational and interpretive programs
- Need identified for better maps, signs

Interpret the Fells: Draft Recommendations

- Complete a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan
- Implement the Botume House visitor center display
- Use the Tudor Barn for interpretive programming



Interpretive programming, DCR



Tudor Barn, DCR

Goal: Work with diverse partners and volunteers to achieve these management goals



ParkServe Day, DCR

Existing Conditions / Findings:

- DCR operating budget decreased by 30% from fiscal year 2009 to 2011
- Individual have a strong sense of attachment to the Fells
- Strong stakeholder organizations can provide valuable organizing, labor and financial resources

Work in partnership: Draft Recommendations

- Work with stakeholders, partners and the public to increase state and private funding for Fells
- Partner on habitat restoration, trail maintenance, species monitoring and interpretive programming
- Establish Stewardship Agreements with all partners to plan, supervise and guide activities



SCA Trail Crew, DCR



Wright's Tower, Bryan Hamlin

RMP Section IV: Issues Discussion

- Land Stewardship Zoning
- Pedestrian and Mountain Biking Recreation
- Recreation with Dogs
- Rules Compliance and Enforcement

Forest Futures

State-wide Landscape Designations

Parklands conserve unique natural and cultural resources while focusing on the provision of recreation, human experiences. Parkland management approaches are expected to range from areas where natural processes dominate to highly modified environments where use is intensively managed.

Land Stewardship Zoning applied through the RMP addresses resource protection at the site specific and resources specific scale.

Land Stewardship Zoning

Zone 1: “highly sensitive natural and cultural resources that require special management approaches and practices to **protect and preserve their features and values**”

Zone 2: “commonly encountered yet important resources on which standard forestry practices and dispersed recreational occur without damaging the potential for **improved ecological health, productivity or protection**”

Zone 3: “developed administrative, maintenance and recreational sites, structures and landscapes that accommodate concentrated use by staff and visitors, **and require intensive maintenance**”

Land Stewardship Zoning

Table 4.3.3. Zone 1 Areas at the DCR Middlesex Fells Reservation

Spot Pond Brook Archaeological District

Occurrences of:

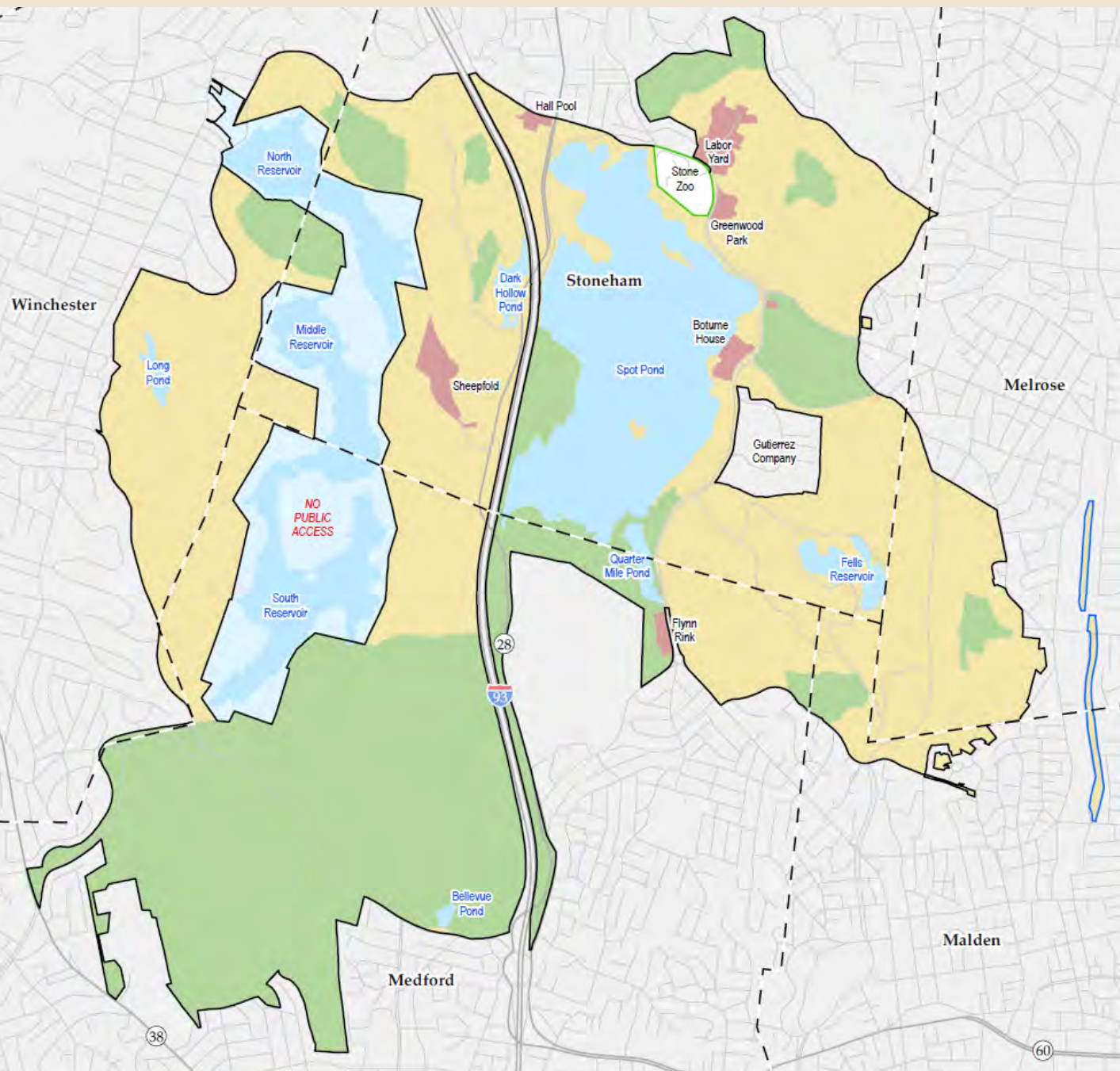
- Ridgetop pitch pine scrub oak
- Circumneutral rocky summit/rock outcrop
- Circumneutral talus forest/woodland
- Sugar maple-oak-hickory forest

Buffered known locations of :

- Large-bracted tick trefoil
- Cankerweed
- American clam shrimp
- Name not disclosed insect
- Early buttercup
- Allegheny buttercup
- Rock knotweed
- Rock spikemoss

Trail-free areas over 10 acres

Southern block of Vernal Pool Core Habitat



- Middlesex Fells Reservation
- Walter D. Stone Memorial Zoo
- Spot Pond Brook
- - - Town Boundary
- Open Water
- Winchester Water Supply Land
- Land Stewardship Zoning**
- Zone 1
- Zone 2
- Zone 3

Specific Zone 1 Guidelines

- All trails within Zone 1 areas will be evaluated. Targeted redundant, confusing, fall-line and poor-condition trails in Zone 1 areas will be closed or re-routed.
- No new trails will be permitted within the trail-free areas over 10 acres.
- Trail definition (borders) will be added to official trails in proximity to sensitive plants.
- Existing allowed trail uses (including pedestrian uses, mountain biking and on-leash dog walking) may be allowed on authorized trails within Zone 1 as designated by DCR through maps and signage.
- No off-trail uses will be permitted in Zone 1, except scientific research.
- Geo-caches will not be permitted in Zone 1.
- Invasive species removal projects will only allowed following careful DCR review of potential impacts, and if necessary permitting through MHC and NHESP.
- Vegetation management will be used only to preserve and enhance identified resource features and values.



Pedestrian and Mountain Biking Issues

DCR evaluated these activities relative to the following criteria:

- Public demand for the activity at the facility scale
- Susceptibility of important natural and cultural resources to damage from the specific recreational activity
- Public safety issues
- Recreational experiences
- Management requirements

Pedestrian and Mountain Biking Issues

Environmental Impacts and Susceptibility of Resources to Recreation

- Evaluates specific soils, wildlife species and plant community characteristics
- Impacts to soil, vegetation, and water are similar between mountain biking and hiking
- Off-trail uses produce the greatest environmental impacts

Pedestrian and Mountain Biking Issues

Public Safety and Recreational Experiences

- Public safety incident and accident data
- Public comments on accidents
- Quality and characteristics of recreational experiences
- Conflict research at the Fells
- Draws on best management approaches to minimize conflict at the Fells

Pedestrian and Mountain Biking Issues

Recommendation

- Enhance both pedestrian and mountain biking
 - including some separation of uses
 - eliminating points of conflict
 - user etiquette and education
 - enforcement and monitoring

Examples

- Virginia Wood and Long Pond area as pedestrian only
- Skyline Trail as pedestrian only
- Reservoir (orange) Trail as shared-use
- Mountain biking trails as part of larger strategy in Dark Hollow area
- Designate additional single-track loop opportunities in Eastern Fells
- Monitoring public safety and compliance

Recreation with Dogs

Environmental Impacts and Susceptibility of Resources to Recreation

- Wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation
- Drinking water supplies
- Rare-species

Recreation with Dogs

Public Safety and Recreational Experiences

- Public safety and incident data at the Fells
- Conflict research at the Fells
- Importance of recreation with dogs
- Impacts to others' experiences

Recreation with Dogs

Recommendations

- Dogs are welcome on all authorized trails with their owners
- DCR is establishing a designated off-leash area at the Sheepfold
- Evaluated various other off-leash opportunities
- RMP does not recommend any other off-leash opportunities at this time
- Monitoring public safety and compliance

Rules Compliance and Enforcement

Culture of Non-Compliance among nearly all users

- Physical and design characteristics
- Lack of enforcement presence
- Cooperation with and among stakeholders

Rules Compliance and Enforcement

Enforcement and compliance strategies

- Information and Education
- Additional Rangers / Mounted Unit
- Issuing Citations
- Targeted Enforcement / Sweeps
- State Police / other agencies
- Park Watch
- Stakeholder Self-Enforcement
- Promote Positive Use

Rules Compliance and Enforcement

Public Safety and Compliance Monitoring Protocol

- Dogs on-leash where required
- Owners picking up and properly disposing of dog waste
- Users staying on marked, official trails
- Users not trespassing on water supply lands
- Bikers staying on trails designated for that use



This Presentation and the Draft RMP Will Be Available Online at:

<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/news/publicmeetings/rmppast.htm>

Public Comments

Please send your comments to:

E-mail: rmp.comments@state.ma.us
Please **put "Fells"** in the subject line

U.S. Mail: Fells RMP
136 Damon Road
Northampton, MA 01060

Note: Public comments submitted to DCR will be posted in their entirety on the DCR website, and no content, including personal information, will be redacted.



Questions and Comments