

DCR Middlesex Fells Reservation - Resource Management Plan

Cultural Resources Workshop – February 23, 2011

Notes from Presentation Question and Answer Session

Q: I've noticed in the past month or so – there seems to be a cozy relationship between the Friends of the Fells and DCR. It may be a result of historical significance, but DCR may want to consider this and how it appears. It's just something I've noticed. The DCR website has a lot of links to the Friends, a lot of presentations from the Friends of the Fells.

Q: Do reservations have legal or some other type of protection (that is different from other DCR lands not named reservations)?

Q: What is the difference between a reservation and a state forest?

A: The term reservation is from colonial New England and has set legal precedent since the time of Native American litigious issues.

Comm: My understanding is that there is no legal distinction. The Forest Futures Visioning Process has proposed reserve designation, but it is an ongoing process.

Comm: The Metropolitan Parks Commission was the first of its kind – this language has evolved over time.

Q: What is the state law on finding artifacts on state property?

A: It is a misdemeanor crime on state land. Metal detectors are prohibited. Digging is not allowed without a permit from the State Archeologist. Folks finding things on the surface should be contacting DCR so we can date it, note it in our database. We hope they will take pictures, document it, and hopefully donate it. We're hoping to have a display to help educate the public.

Comm: I found something and have been looking for information on who to contact.

Q: So theoretically, if I am walking along and I find something, what should I do? Should I leave it where it is?

A: Call me (Ellen Berkland) – take a picture, note the location, and I will go out and document it.

Comm: But digging is illegal without the proper permitting – and that includes trail maintenance.

Comm: Yes – anything requiring digging requires a permit.

Q: Is walking on trails affecting artifacts?

A: There are many natural factors at play. To control and monitor human impact is important. Think about how we need to keep this around for another 12,000 years. I monitor for erosion, etc. but I try not to dig.

Q: This is so fascinating. Is there a place to go to see some of this stuff? A website?

A: We work a lot with school groups – Melrose High has an archeology elective. It would be great to get a group together to do more work and try to identify some things. There is some stuff here at Botume House. I just started – there is more to do and more I want to do.

Q: It would be a great idea to do an archeological walk to teach about Virginia Wood and more in the Fells.

A: The Friends of the Fells have many programs, including archeology walks – but we're always interested in more.

Q: Are trails mapped in such a way to move people away from sites, prevent erosion? Are some of these structures being maintained?

A: The inventory is a big part of this – it will help us get a sense of the most significant and sensitive resources, conditions, and will help us prioritize what needs the most work or help, and we can then designate or seek out funds. We've done some work already at Tudor Barn and Botume House. But the Resource Management Plan will help with that.

Q: The MIT observatory – any chance it will be restored?

A: I am unsure of the site and don't know.

Q: Any other work that's been done on the Botume House other than the first floor?

A: The most recent work was the handicap ramp and the raising of the floor in the entrance, and a northwest corner exit.

Comm: I ask because I was totally fascinated by a previous tour I took of the house that explained the history. A year later, I took another tour and was horrified by the change. I think it should be restored back to the Victorian era features and the office should be removed.

Q: Tudor Barn – I know a lot of money was put into restoring the structure – but are there plans to do anything with it?

A: We recognize it is an area of need. I believe it's being used for some park storage facilities.

Comm: The workshop March 16th on education and interpretation would be a good opportunity to discuss this.

Q: Any plans for signage to educate others?

A: Not that I'm aware of – but it is a good idea. We need a sense of what's out there – we need to address consistency.

Q: Do you think there should be more signs?

A: Yes, I see neat things but I don't know the historical significance – it would be great to have that pointed out.

Q: On the issue of signage – I am not a big fan of lots of signs when I am in the woods, but having them at some of the most significant areas might be good. Having a list with the locations would be great because people can find these spots if they want. Is there a list?

A: We need to consider different interpretations. There is no list yet – we need to identify the resources first, and identify the interpretation.

Comments

It would be lovely to bring urban kids to green space and give them a context, teach them about the space.

The Friends of the Fells got a call a while back from Medford High School asking to have some kind of student role tied to their community service requirement to help with care for the Fells. We don't have the resources but if we wrote a grant it could be a great opportunity to encourage and growth the youth interest in the Fells.

Regarding the earlier implied relationship of the DCR and Friends of the Fells – I don't think it's all that cozy, but if DCR does want connections to knowledge and resources in regards to the Fells – it would be wise to consult with the Friends.

I've been following this for a while. I realize the state doesn't have much money. The Friends of the Fells are a great resource for information and it is one we need to tap. In regards to recreation, we face a real challenge in Boston with space for recreation. Today we think too easily of just jumping in our cars.

Lobbyists are fountains of knowledge too. Have to be careful with that.

I am a member of the Friends of the Fells and I see the opposite of your comment about the Friends being cozy with DCR.

When things are restored (e.g. signs), there is almost immediate vandalism. We have to consider that with signs – in terms of money and resources.

But to DCR's credit, they get right on cleaning off graffiti because if left it is an invitation. Their responsiveness is great.

I am strongly in favor of multiple uses. I have used all uses over time – I would like to see all activities continued in a safe way for all.

Other Submitted Comments

When speaking of issues, and behaviors that are under the control of the Mass. General Laws, you should be able to reference the public to those laws. – Michael Fagen, Somerville