



Heathland with Flowering Broom Crowberry, Bob Conway

Executive Summary

Introduction

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) are “working” documents that consider the past, present and future of a forest, park or reservation. They include an inventory and assessment of environmental, cultural and recreational resources; identify unique characteristics and values; and develop clear management goals and objectives. RMPs provide a guide to the short and long-term management of properties under the stewardship of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). They are intended to be working documents for setting priorities, capital and operational budgeting, resource allocation, and enhancing communication and cooperation with park visitors and the surrounding communities.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation is directed by a 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 the following:

“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 Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Recreation “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 Stewardship Council. 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. Resource Management Plans, and the process developed to prepare these plans, exceed all legislative mandates.

This plan covers the Myles Standish Planning Unit, which includes Myles Standish State Forest (MSSF), and conservation restrictions held by DCR on Camp Cachalot and the Briggs property located in Plymouth. The two Conservation Restrictions are included in this plan because of their physical proximity to Myles Standish State Forest.

Management Principle and Goals

Myles Standish State Forest (MSSF), the largest public recreation area located in the densely populated southeastern Massachusetts, offers a variety of affordable opportunities for outdoor recreation on 12,404 acres of public land. Each year over 600,000 visitors enjoy camping, swimming, fishing, biking, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, skiing and hunting in the Forest.

The State Forest Commission acquired approximately 5,700 acres in 1916 to establish MSSF. Only one state forest in the DCR system (Otter River State Forest) is older than MSSF. During the 1930s, much of the existing infrastructure was constructed by state-funded unemployed crews and the federally-funded Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) including roads, trails and recreation areas. These crews also continued reforestation efforts in the Forest.

The magnificent work of glaciers and coastal geologic processes in southeastern Massachusetts produced a landscape dotted with globally rare natural communities. MSSF contains a significant amount of these globally rare communities, including the third largest Pine Barrens in the world, and numerous coastal plain ponds harboring unique plants and wildlife. MSSF also protects portions of the Plymouth-Carver Sole Source Aquifer, one of the largest groundwater resources in the state.

DCR is entrusted with the stewardship of MSSF. A thorough inventory and assessment of existing conditions and activities, in concert with substantive public input, is necessary to establish guidelines for future management of MSSF. The following management principle and associated management goals are identified as a foundational structure for the Resource Management Plan, which will guide future management of this important facility.

Management Principle

Through the creative use of limited state management resources and partnerships, achieve a sustainable balance between the conservation of important natural and cultural resources, and the provision of quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Management Goals

Maintain and enhance habitats for rare species, native plants and wildlife.

Implement a program of prescribed fire and mechanical fuel reduction to maintain and improve Pine Barrens habitat for rare Pine Barrens species, as well as to reduce the potential for wildfire. If the Pine Barrens remain undisturbed for long periods of time, the ecosystem will transition into shade-tolerant white pine and hardwood forests, displacing rare species that rely on open Pine Barrens habitat. Remove tree plantations consisting of non-native pine species to reduce fire danger and improve Pine Barrens habitat. Pursue the acquisition or protection of in-holdings and abutting properties containing significant Pine Barrens habitat.

Protect and enhance the quality of water resources within the Forest.

Manage water resources of the Forest to ensure healthy and safe water-based recreation; conserve and improve the habitats of native aquatic plants and animals; and protect the Plymouth-Carver Sole Source Aquifer. Manage the coastal plain pond shores to enhance endangered species habitats, and protect them from overuse and avoidable environmental damage.

Preserve the distinct scenic and cultural qualities of the Forest.

The Forest's cultural resources represent a range of human endeavors from pre-contact Native American occupation to cranberry growing. Preservation of these cultural resources and landscapes connects us to our past. Implement practices to protect the intact archaeological record at MSSF. Preserve the CCC landscape and remaining structures.

Provide diverse opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation.

Maintain a sustainable network of walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobile and skiing trails to provide connections among day use areas, campground areas and regional greenways. Renovate and maintain comfort stations to provide modern sanitary facilities for public use. Restore natural landscapes surrounding recreational facilities to eliminate recreational damage, improve landscape aesthetics and provide sustainable public access to pond shores. Improve forest roads for safety, aesthetics, fire protection and maintenance.

Expand interpretive and environmental education programs.

Effective park management largely depends on the support of well-informed visitors. Provide interpretive programs and materials that educate visitors about the impact of their actions on the Forest's important natural and cultural resources.

Involve partners in the achievement of the management goals.

Maintain and develop partnerships with other state agencies, adjacent municipalities, non-profit organizations, local universities and businesses to provide quality outdoor recreational opportunities while conserving the important natural and cultural resources of MSSF. Establish and administer sustainable standard practices for users permitted within the Forest.

Priority Recommendations

This RMP identifies 86 management recommendations. These recommendations are specific actions to be taken to achieve the six management goals. The following 26 priority recommendations focus on short term activities to provide healthy habitat for native and state-listed species, improve existing recreation facilities, and stabilize existing infrastructure to reduce future maintenance costs.

Short Term Action	DCR Lead Unit
Maintain and enhance habitats for rare species, native plants and wildlife.	
Develop and implement a comprehensive fire management program to include a combination of mechanical fuel reduction and prescribed fire to improve and maintain habitat quality for rare Pine Barrens species, as well as to reduce the potential for an uncontrollable wildfire.	Forestry and Fire Control
Continue to exclude motorized off-highway vehicles (OHV) from MSSF, and limit motorized vehicle traffic on unpaved forest service roads and utility corridors to minimal traffic for the purposes of maintenance, safety, habitat management and monitoring. Monitor and enforce OHV restriction using the Park Watch Program with law enforcement support.	Ranger Services
Develop and implement a plan to remove tree plantations consisting of non-native species in consultation with the Forest Reserves Science Advisory Committee to reduce fire danger and improve Pine Barrens habitat. Following cutting, controlled burning should be implemented to stimulate sprouting of native Pine Barrens shrubs.	Forestry
Conduct both natural and cultural resource surveys to identify sensitive resources in areas scheduled for fuel reduction, controlled burns or plantation removal operations.	Planning and Forestry
Maintain a variety of grasslands and early successional forests to provide habitat for uncommon grassland and shrubland bird species such as whip-poor-wills, prairie warblers, American kestrels and bluebirds.	Forestry and State Parks
Work with MassWildlife to prepare a new management plan and MOA for the Pheasant and Quail Management Areas to control non-native species, promote native plants and reduce trail impacts in consultation with NHESP.	Forestry and State Parks
Protect and enhance the quality of water resources within the Forest.	
Post invasive species warning signs at the East Head Reservoir, Rocky, Curlew and Charge Pond fisherman landings warning boat owners of the need to avoid transporting invasive species from pond to pond on their boats.	State Parks with Lakes and Ponds

Short Term Action	DCR Lead Unit
Restore compacted and eroded areas at Charge, Fearing, Barrett, College and Curlew Ponds.	State Parks
Preserve the distinct scenic and cultural qualities of the Forest.	
Until an archaeological survey has been completed, new alterations of undisturbed, level and well-drained areas around ponds and wetlands should be avoided, and monitored where activities are already occurring.	State Parks
Back fill the “Homestead” dump site to eliminate the OHV track and restore original topography.	State Parks
Find a park use for the Perry House that minimizes alterations to the building (e.g. Environmental Police Headquarters, Camp Store or Nature Center). If a park use is not found, consider the property for inclusion in the Historic Curatorship Program.	State Parks with Cultural Resources
Stabilize the CCC Fearing Pond Bathhouse to avoid further deterioration.	Engineering
Provide diverse opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation.	
Re-open picnic area and beach at Fearing Pond to reduce over use of College Pond day use area during peak summer weekends.	State Parks
Expand College Pond day use area swimming beach.	State Parks
Increase frequency of comfort station cleaning during peak summer weekends.	State Parks
Replace the central Curlew Pond comfort station to provide accessible facilities with showers and dish washing sinks.	Engineering
Complete minor comfort station exterior repairs, interior renovations and install dish washing sinks at the Charge, Fearing and Barrett Pond camping areas.	State Parks
Prepare site plans for each cottage pond that protects sensitive wetland communities, corrects shore erosion, provides appropriate access for public recreation and preserves the cottage communities. The site plans should identify cottages that must be removed or relocated to protect sensitive wetland communities or provide appropriate public recreational access.	Planning with State Parks
For the remaining privately owned cottages, continue the current management policy of eventually eliminating the private cottage program through gradual retirement of existing permits.	Legal

Short Term Action	DCR Lead Unit
Work with Partners to schedule regular removal of pine needles and prune vegetation along the paved bike path.	State Parks
Repair cracks and heaves along the paved bike trail. As needed, add trail signs at road crossings, winding and hilly areas.	State Parks
Resolve right of way legal issues and repair the road over the East Head Reservoir dam to provide direct access from the West Entrance and Headquarters complex to the College, Charge and Fearing Pond use areas, MCI Plymouth, Camp Squanto and Camp Chacalot, reducing heavy truck damage to Lower College and Halfway Pond Roads.	Legal Services and Engineering
Expand interpretive and environmental education programs.	
Provide new interpretive kiosks at the Charge Pond Road Parking Lot #5 and Fire Tower Parking Lot #6. The kiosks should include a map of the Forest, Forest rules, description of facilities available in the Forest and a brochure holder for trail maps. Provide a Fire Danger Sign at the East Entrance.	State Parks
Install interpretive panels and trail map holders on the existing kiosks at the East Entrance Parking Lot #4 and the Upper College Pond Road Parking Lot #2, including a map of the Forest, Forest rules and a description of facilities available in the Forest.	State Parks
Involve partners in the achievement of the Management Goals.	
Provide assistance to the Friends of MSSF in identifying and controlling invasive plant species within sensitive natural communities.	Ecology Program
Work with the Friends of MSSF to establish a Native Plant Garden and Pine Barrens interpretive programs to educate park visitors and area landowners in techniques for enhancing native plants and birds, and pest control to prevent chemical poisoning of native wildlife.	Forestry and Fire Control