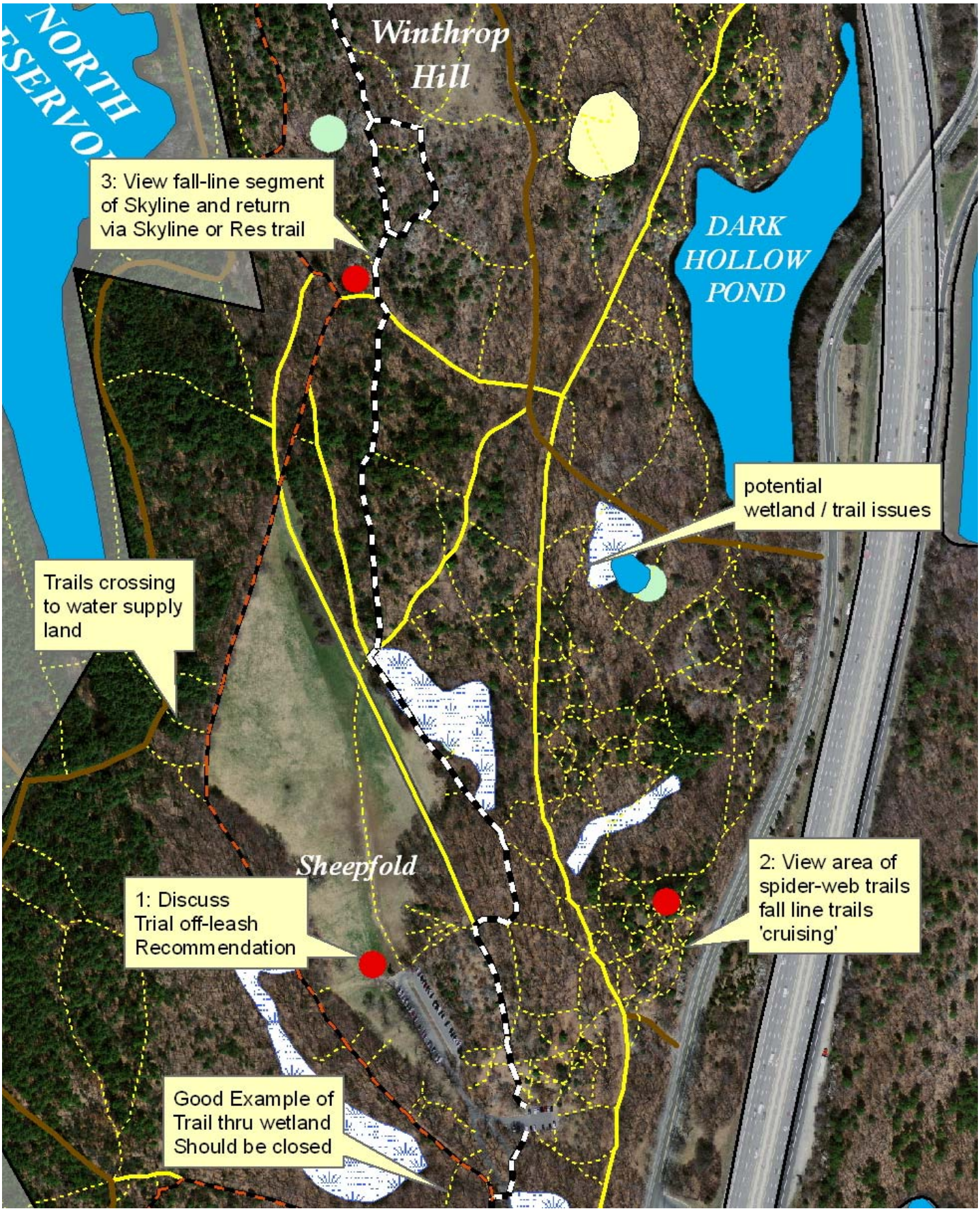
DCR Middlesex Fells Site Walk – September 25 and 30, 2010



Selected Draft Recommendations

6.1 a: Close trails and reduce the number and miles of trails within the trail system. Trails that may be impacting sensitive natural and cultural resources, and those trail segments that contribute to user confusion are a priority for closure. These include:

- Confusing 'spider-web' trails north of the Sheepfold and Dark Hollow Pond
- Redundant trails in poor condition or with poor alignments
- Unnecessary trails leading to posted watershed lands
- Redundant trails impacting Priority Natural Communities, vernal pools or wetland resources
- Dead end trails

6.1 b: Implement a multi-pronged trail closure program at the Fells. Successful trail closure programs

- User education that provides information about why we are closing trails
- Trail tread restoration including tread aeration and transplanting of native vegetation
- Signage at trailheads to indicate that trails are closed
- Physical barriers such as fences, logs or brush to indicate that the trail is closed and to eliminate sight lines
- Enforcement of "Stay on Designated Trails" (no off-trail activities allowed unless specifically permitted)

6.3 c: Improve signage and trail marking within the Middlesex Fells Trail System. DCR, ideally in cooperation with stewardship partners, will implement the trail sign standards described within our *Trails Manual* (see Appendix I).

- The Fells trail system will benefit from additional intersection directional signs at main intersections. Intersection directional signs are the most important source of information for users, and can serve to enhance safety, avoid bad user experiences and increase use of under-used sections of the trail.

6.4 c: Protect Certified and Potential Vernal Pools.

- During new trail planning, identify and if possible, certify potential vernal pools
- Close and / or re-route any trails within vernal pools
- Use best management practices to prevent sedimentation into pools
- Enforce "On Trail? On Leash!" policy
- Maintain shading around pools, do not clear vegetation around pool edges
- Maintain habitat structure in adjacent upland by not disturbing rocks, tree trunks or branches near pool
- Maintain habitat structure in pools by not removing or piling branches
- Consider relocating heavily traveled trails that impact vernal pools at least 50 feet away from them

6.7 a: Increase DCR Ranger presence on trails within the Middlesex Fells trail system. Increase both the number of ranger hours available for the Fells and the number of hours on the trail system, especially at peak times.

6.8 a: Maintain, promote, and enforce "hiking only" trails within the Middlesex Fells trail system, including, as a priority, the Skyline and Rock Circuit trails.

6.9 a: Implement the Dark Hollow trail proposal.

- Evaluate, design, and permit (if necessary) 1- 3 official designated multi-use routes connecting Bear Hill Parking to the Sheepfold in Dark Hollow area
- Develop these routes on existing trails, and designated and improved them in conjunction with closing approximately 2 miles of spider web trails and trails that might impact sensitive resources in this area
- Monitor and evaluate

- Designate the Reservoir (Orange) Trail as a multi-use trail. This trail is currently used by a variety of users, and its topography and design are appropriate to support multiple uses.

- Work with stewardship partners to maintain and improve this trail through annual trail maintenance