

As part of the Middlesex Fells Resource Management Plan Process, the public has been provided the opportunity to submit comments via email to an email address established by the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration. Below are comments received from the public between February 18 and February 23, 2011, in the order received. Email addresses and contact information has been redacted to prevent unsolicited email contact. We encourage the public to review these comments to gain a better understanding of different information and points of view on the management of the Fells.

We encourage you to submit your own thoughts, ideas and experiences but ask you to refrain from responding directly to another person's comments.

From: Ken Krause [REDACTED]

Sent: Fri 2/18/2011 9:11 AM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Middlesex Fells bird species

Attachments:

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Dear Fells RMP team:

I shared the information Paul Jahnige provided from the recent Fells RMP workshop with the Arlington Birds list serve, and one of the expert Arlington birders, Marjorie Rines, sent the below response with some additional information on species she has observed in the Fells.

Could you please share this with Wayne Petersen and anyone else involved in the RMP?

Thank you.

- Ken Krause
Medford

On Thu, 2/17/11, Marj. Rines [REDACTED] wrote:

From: Marj. Rines [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [Arlington Birds] Birds of the Middlesex Fells
To: [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, February 17, 2011, 10:02 AM

Hi Ken, I thought you'd like to update the warbler list for the Fells: I personally have seen 32 species of warbler, and I know of a sighting there from last year of a 33rd. Two species are conspicuous by their absence - Cerulean and chat. The list of species I know have been seen are:

- Blue-winged Warbler
- Golden-winged Warbler
- Tennessee Warbler
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Nashville Warbler
- Northern Parula
- Yellow Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Magnolia Warbler
- Cape May Warbler
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Black-throated Gray Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Blackburnian Warbler

Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Palm Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Mourning Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Canada Warbler

On 2/15/2011 11:51 AM, [REDACTED] wrote:

> From DCR newsletter:

>

> In the Middlesex Fells Resource Management (RMP) Plan Flora and Fauna Workshop held at the Botume House on February 9, an excellent panel of presenters described a Fells environment in which the "restorative forces of nature" have been at work over the past 115 years, but also one facing constant stresses of human use, fragmentation, climate change and, ironically, fire suppression.

>

> The presentations are available on-line at:

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

>

> Here are a highlights with regard to birds:

>

> Fells Feathered Friends

>

> Mass Audubon has identified the Middlesex Fells as a Massachusetts Important Bird Area (IBA). Wayne Petersen, director of the IBA program at Mass Audubon, described IBAs as sites providing essential habitat to one or more species of breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. Specifically, IBA criteria focus on birds that are vulnerable because they are species with a restricted range, species of conservation concern, species requiring unique habitats, or species that are vulnerable because they congregate and occur in high densities at specific sites.

>

> As Wayne Petersen pointed out, large protected parks in otherwise highly developed landscapes can be essential for night-time migrants looking for a place to rest and feed when overtaken by daylight. In the Boston metropolitan area, the Middlesex Fells stands out as a beacon of darkness in a sea of light.

>

> One-hundred eighty species of birds have been documented in recent years at the Fells. This includes 42 families among them warblers (36 species) such as Mourning, Blackpoll and Northern Parula, and a variety of hawks including Northern Harrier, Sharp-Shinned and Cooper's hawk.

>

> Potential threats to birds at the Fells include habitat fragmentation, natural forest succession, impacts created by invasive species and brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds. Habitat fragmentation at the landscape scale can seriously impact breeding bird populations, but the protected landscape of the Fells provides a substantial refuge from human development north of Boston. Fragmentation on a smaller scale can nonetheless impact sensitive, interior forest-nesting species as a result of high road and trail densities, high levels of human use, and off-leash pets and other "camp-following" mammals such as raccoons and skunks.

>

> A significant threat at the Fells, the Brown-headed Cowbirds can more readily parasitize the nests of birds breeding in fragmented habitats than in unbroken tracts of land since they are fundamentally birds of open areas, not forests. Because a female cowbird is capable of laying up to 40-60 eggs per season, this represents a potential threat to species normally insulated from brood parasitism by nesting in unfragmented forests. Other birds require early successional habitats such as old fields and shrublands for nesting. At the Fells, species like the Brown Thrashers, Prairie Warblers and Field Sparrows are shrubland specialists. As the forests in the Fells mature (as David Brown noted in his talk), one consequence is the gradual loss of early successional habitats and the species that rely on them.

>

> Finally, non-native species of plants can also have a dramatic effect on certain species. Petersen pointed out that the berries from some invasive plant species do not contain the same nutrition as native berries. Accordingly, migratory birds may not obtain nutrients of sufficient quality to enable them to successfully complete what are oftentimes very long fall migrations.

>

> - Ken Krause

From: [Adam Glick](#) [REDACTED]

Sent: Fri 2/18/2011 1:45 PM

To: [MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP](#)

Cc:

Subject: NEMBA's formal objection to Mike Ryan/Friends of the Fells being included as a panelist in the Fells RMP Recreation Workshop

Attachments:

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Please record this as NEMBA's formal objection to Mike Ryan/Friends of the Fells being included as a panelist in the Fells RMP Recreation Workshop.

Regards,

A

--

Adam Glick, President
Greater Boston NEMBA
www.gbnemba.org

[REDACTED]

From: Adam Glick [REDACTED]

Sent: Sat 2/19/2011 1:21 AM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Clarification on NEMBA's removal from the Fells RMP Recreation Workshop as a co-sponsor

Attachments:

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NEMBA would like the official Fells RMP record to reflect that Mike Ryan/Friends of the Fell forced DCR to remove us as co-sponsors of the Recreation workshop which resulted in NEMBA being removed from an official planning capacity for this workshop despite NEMBA's significant involvement in recreation in the Fells and substantial participation, public and stakeholder, in the Fells planning process.

Further, Mike Ryan/Friends of the Fells forced DCR to place himself on the panel of speakers in the Recreation workshop when AMC was already in place to speak to hiking/foot experiences in the Fells.

Regards,
A

--

Adam Glick, President
Greater Boston NEMBA
www.gbnemba.org
[REDACTED]


From: David Brown [REDACTED]

Sent: Sat 2/19/2011 7:39 AM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Supplemental remarks

Attachments:  [Supplemental remarks.doc\(55KB\)](#)

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Attached are supplemental remarks for inclusion in the public posting for the Fells RMP.
--David Brown

Supplemental remarks to the Resource Management Plan review for the Middlesex Fells Reservation, 2011:

General:

As a presenter at the wildlife portion of the RMP review, I and the other speakers were encouraged to avoid subjects that would be covered in subsequent public sessions on recreation and education. Since it is impossible to entirely de-couple wildlife issues from either recreation or education, I am taking advantage of the invitation to provide supplemental remarks under both of those headings. I ask that they be included in the Resource Management Plan review and considered in creating the new plan.

My personal experience with the Middlesex Fells spans nearly 60 years, having lived in the North Boston area for much of that time and having used the park frequently as a hiking and birding destination. In 1998-9 I conducted for the Friends of the Fells and the MDC a mammal tracking survey upon which I reported in the Flora and Fauna session. I have also conducted mammal and bird surveys at Alewife Reservation in Cambridge and am the former chairman of the Friends of Breakheart Reservation.

Recreation:

Unlike the parks farther west that have traditionally been managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the parks that encircle the Boston metropolitan area are surrounded by a potentially unlimited user population. As such, recreational management policies with respect to parks like the Middlesex Fells need to be substantially different from those more appropriate in less populated parts of the State.

Over my lifetime the degree to which the Fells has suffered degradation has varied directly not only with the size of the user population and but also with the varying impact of different uses. As far as the size is concerned, each new form of active outdoor recreation brings yet another wave of new users to the Fells and the other metropolitan parks, new visitors who might seldom visit before their interest in the novel recreational form. Simply the numbers of these new visitors added to the traditional uses, both legal and illegal, increase pressure on the natural beauty and the natural content of the resource.

On the other hand the impact of different uses varies widely. Wild animals such as birds and mammals have a “shock radius” within which they will not tolerate the approach of humans. If that intrusion persists over time by repeated disturbance, the wildlife will disappear from the park. For some wild animals such as gray squirrels this radius is quite small (and perhaps one of the reasons for their overabundance in the park). However, many shyer mammals and most species of birds will not tolerate close proximity of humans or pets. Unfortunately, the dense and redundant trail system in the Fells facilitates the close approach of visitors to wildlife in nearly every part of the park.

There is also an esthetic objection to frequent incursions by demonstrative, active recreationalists. The Fells and the other metropolitan parks serve as islands of serenity into which urban/suburbanites can escape the hectic, noisy civilization that surrounds them. If that

noise and commotion is allowed to pursue into these sanctuaries the visitor seeking quiet natural surroundings, then a very real resource for people is lost.

Regrettably, the Fells cannot be all things to all people and remain what its founders envisioned as its proper function. Clearly some evaluation of various uses has to take place by the administering agency on a scale representing both the disturbance-level and destructiveness of any given activity. The unenviable task of differentiating various uses falls to the administrators of the park system who are conducting the current review and whose policies will largely determine the fate of the park for decades.

While stressing that the Fells has suffered from perfectly legal and permitted overuse over the decades of my experience in the park, some activities are more intrusive and destructive than others:

Dogs off-leash. I love dogs, too. But as a naturalist of over 50 years experience, I am not blind to the effects of numbers of dogs when they are allowed to roam over the park on the dense network of trails. I have often noted a “dead zone” on either side of popular trails that is relatively devoid of wild animals. Dogs have very intelligent noses that they follow to ground-denning and –nesting species of wildlife in those zones. The small number of ovenbirds and hermit thrushes in the Fells, both of which are ground-nesters and for which there is ample habitat, is an example that I attribute largely to this marauding by dogs allowed by their owners to run off-leash.

Mountain biking. What the individual mountain bike lacks in destructiveness to a trail system, it has the potential to make up for in numbers. While much of the damage to the fire road system in the Fells can be attributed to many years of abuse by motorized trail bikes, not that many people in the user population would want to bear the expense of buying one to ride in the park. However, almost anyone can afford a mountain bike, and when the “anyone” is multiplied by a virtually infinite number of potential mountain bikers in the populous Boston area, this form of active recreation has a potential for damage equal to its growth.

The effects of the impact of mountain biking on wild animals is less clear. However, there is no question that a colorful mountain biker moving fast over the trail system has substantial visual impact on wildlife that he surprises and closes quickly upon. Once again, the impact of the individual biker is less significant than the potential frequency of such disturbances by a large number of riders over a dense trail network.

People who visit the Fells are often offended by the intrusion of mountain bikers into their woodland experience. If you visit the park for quiet reflection and appreciation of its beauty or wildlife, the sudden appearance of a flashy mountain biker has considerable negative impact on the esthetic experience. And I would insist that providing such an experience was precisely the rationale for creating the park in the first place.

Other demonstrative active recreation. Although the above are among the worst activities currently having an impact on the Fells, it would be unfair to single them out as the only active recreation with serious effects on the park. Certainly, paint ball warriors move off-trail where

other visitors seldom go and as such have potential impact on ground species, from wildflowers to nesting birds. However, at this juncture, at least, the sport has not risen in popularity to the level of the previously mentioned activities. Competitive orienteering also involves off-trail running with the same sort of disturbance, but this is a very small sport the meets of which tend to be infrequent and scattered. Horses can do considerable damage to a trail and fire road system as at Great Brook Farm SP in Carlisle. However, very few people own or rent horses to ride in the Middlesex Fells and so their impact seems to be minimal.

Two kinds of users visit the Fells: people who love the Fells and people who love what they do in the Fells. In evaluating the impact of various uses, I submit that the interests of the former should be favored over those of the latter. To fail to differentiate uses and continue to view the current contentions as just a conflict among equally valid user-groups will result in the continuing degradation of the resource. The future of the Fells as an island of natural tranquility in a sea of bustling civilization will be in increasing jeopardy as marketers of new recreational fads invent new toys for public use in the outdoors.

Education and Interpretation:

People will not have to be convinced to protect what they love. Interpretive programs to reveal the marvelous natural content of the park and programs that emphasize natural beauty are a way to increase that “love” for the place and change the ratio of active versus passive visitation.

Natural history interpretive programs help people to see behind the screen of trees, in a sense, to see the inner ecological workings behind its blank green surface. Bird walks reveal the colorful songbirds that hide in the foliage, tracking programs show the record of otherwise unsuspected mammal activity hidden in the night, tree identification programs help the visitor to differentiate the mix of trees that might otherwise be dismissed as a monochrome of green, Wildflower walks show the amazing richness as well as the vulnerability of these plants that are anchored to one spot and so cannot flee disturbance, geology programs show the history of our landscape over a time-scale infinitely longer than our human lives and fill the visitor not only with a sense of humility at our brief tenancy but also with a sense of responsibility for these last undeveloped tracts where evidence of these processes can still be seen.

Education programs conducted by DCR rangers or by outside experts sponsored by DCR are critical as an antidote to the all-too-common public sense of the parks as playpens for active recreation. In the past the DCR rangers have done what they can within their limited budgets and skill sets. The Friends of the Middlesex Fells, through its own interpretive programs, has been exemplary in improving public awareness of the natural wonders of the Fells. However, it, too, has limited resources.

Birds, wildflowers and mammals don't pay taxes and don't vote. Neither does natural serenity and beauty. Educational programming is a way to engage more of the public in caring about and becoming a constituency for those values. An increase in this sort of programming is critical to the survival of the park as a natural area in the future.

Conclusions:

It is to be expected that a publicly funded entity will attempt to please the most people, since it is funded by all the people. However, as a fragile and finite resource, the Fells cannot be all things to all of them, as much as this might conflict with our democratic sentiments. Evaluations and choices have to be made.

Despite many years of public abuse and overuse, the Fells persists to this day as a beautiful natural area, although an increasingly worn and tattered version of its original concept. Over my lifetime, it seems, neither beauty nor nature has had an official seat at the policy table. It appears that unless those values were represented accidentally by someone at the table for other more practical reasons, then they do not seem to have been considered in managing the reservation. With the change of administration from the MDC to DCR, there is, perhaps, a chance of changing management and decision-making values in the direction of favoring the original concept of the park over the pressures of active recreation by the burgeoning human population surrounding it.

In my view activities with low intrusion factors should be officially encouraged while discouraging activities with high disturbance factors on both wildlife and human visitors seeking peace and natural beauty.

The dense and redundant trail and fire-road network should be reduced by half, and several extensive trail-less areas should be designated in the park as refuges for wildlife.

Renewed and increased emphasis on interpretive programs by rangers, qualified presenters and the Friends of the Fells should be supported in order to change the tone of the park away from active recreation and toward passive appreciation of its natural values

David W. Brown

David Brown's Wildlife Services, Warwick, MA

Formerly chairman of the Friends of Breakheart Reservation

February 18, 2011

From: Adam Glick [REDACTED]

Sent: Sat 2/19/2011 11:16 AM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Exactly who is responsible for certifying Vernal Pools in the Fells?

Attachments:

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It would seem that there is an abnormally high quantity of potential vernal pools noted in the Fells. NHESP implied as such in their review of the data.

This raises the question of where this data came from and whether there is bias attached to over-identifying anything that might remotely be a vernal pool in an attempt to restrict recreation uses at the Fells.

It would seem that vernal pools have to meet known, established scientific criteria and that qualified, official state biologists/environmental employees should be the ones ultimately certifying them. Not volunteers or hobbyists.

We would also note that in the last twenty years, despite increased recreation use in the Fells, that vernal pools appear to be *increasing* based on the data being presented.

Regards,

A

--

Adam Glick, President
Greater Boston NEMBA
www.gbnemba.org
[REDACTED]

From: Elizabeth Stacey [REDACTED]

Sent: Sun 2/20/2011 11:18 AM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Please protect the fells!

Attachments:

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For all of us with 2 feet or 4 or wings, please protect the Fells.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Stacey
Marshfield, MA

Sent from my iPad

From: David Rondeau [REDACTED]

Sent: Sun 2/20/2011 1:43 PM

To: MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP

Cc:

Subject: Usage of the trails in the Middlesex Fells

Attachments:

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I would like to offer my opinion on the the usage of the trails at the Middlesex Fells Reservation. I am a father of three children and I have been taking my family to the Fells since before they could walk. We love to hike the trails and look for letterboxes.

I have no problem sharing some of the trails with mountain bikers, but I am very concerned to hear that you may be considering opening all the trails to bikers. I believe this would destroy the pleasures of hiking in the Fells. Let me explain why.

Because of their size and the speed at which they travel, mountain bikes take the right of way on all but the widest trails. Most mountain bikers are courteous and considerate, but many of the trails are far too narrow to accommodate both hikers and bicyclists. Whenever I hike with my children on mountain biking trails, I have to worry. I have to pay attention and listen for approaching bikes and make sure my kids are aware and get out of the way. If all the trails were like this it would make hiking in the fells completely unenjoyable. I can't even imagine taking my kids on smaller trails because the fear of them being struck by a careless mountain biker would just be too great.

The Fells are a resource that should be enjoyed by all. This does not mean that the resources are shared equally—it means that everyone should be able to enjoy some part of the Fells equally. Please don't ruin the Fells for hikers by allowing mountain bikes on all the trails!

Sincerely,

David B. Rondeau

[REDACTED]
Stoneham, MA 02180

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wed 2/23/2011 4:44 PM

To: [MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP](#)

Cc:

Subject: Comments regarding the RMP Wetlands and Water Resources Workshop

Attachments:

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Comments regarding the RMP

Wetlands and Water Resources Workshop

Held on February 17, 2011 meeting

At the Botume House

Winchester Reservoirs

The absence of a representative from the Winchester Water Department was disappointing.

I suggest that DCR solicited comments from them regarding public access to the paths around their reservoirs. While I'm aware from a previous article of their reasons for no access, there were a number of frustrated attendees that deserve feedback on this topic.

Vernal Pools:

The 100 ft area of protection for vernal pools is insufficient and should be about 400 ft.

I suggest this as a person who has certified numerous pools in the Fells and as one who is well aware of the year long habitats of salamanders. It is also in agreement with the suggestion of the Presenter of the Vernal Pool topic.

I suggest that RMP planning treat all Potential Vernal Pools (PVPs) as 'certified', given the presenter's statement that 85% of (PVPs), as identified by Natural Heritage, will, once investigated, end up as certifiable.

The above two suggestions take on more credence when it is stated that the designation of the PVPs was done in a very conservative manner.

Private Boating

I was amazed that some attendees did not realize that some/most private boats could transport invasive plants from one body of water to another. DCR should make this better known. On occasion I have seen small private boats in Dark Hollow Pond, and I'm guessing other ponds in the Fells are also subject to this threat.

Enforcement

Ah, enforcement. Here again, protecting our water resources requires actual "enforcers"; self enforcement doesn't work.

Hubert Holley

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wed 2/23/2011 4:57 PM

To: [MOPC Middlesex Fells RMP](#)

Cc:

Subject: Additional Comments regarding the RMP Wetlands and Water Resources
Workshop

Attachments:  [AWATER~1.DOC\(36KB\)](#)

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When the RMP is being finalized, I suggest that the DCR utilize the Friends of the Fells for assistance regarding water resources within the Fells.

While I am a former president of the Friends of the Fells, I am making this suggestion privately and without consulting with the Friends.

Following (and attached) is some background of the long history of the Friends on this subject:

Friends of the Fells (FOF) Involvement with Issues Concerning Water Resources in the Middlesex Fells Reservation

Friends Have A History Of Working With MWRA

1. Anita of FOF on (1995??)Citizens Advisory Group for Covered Reservoir 1 helps obtain significant mitigation including;
 - 1.1. Insuring public access
 - 1.2. Post and rail fence instead of chain link
 - 1.3. Natural Resource Inventory of impacted area
 - 1.4. Construction of Visitors Center at Botume House after MWRA vacated it after project
 - 1.5. Initial planting of natural flora on meadow atop the covered reservoir
2. Site visits and recommendation for arborist for Basins 1 & 2 earthen dam
3. Site visits and suggestions to MWRA for tree removal at top of Spot Pond Dam
4. Strongly suggested location of Covered Reservoir 2 on developed land, as early as 2002. (Thanks to MWRA for the acquired location.)

Spot Pond Brook Remediation

Friends worked with MWRA and Stoneham Con Com on remediation after Pump House spill contamination

Spot Pond Access

Unsuccessfully opposed MDC flawed tree cutting program around Spot Pond

Hockey Rink and Venue

Successfully opposed proposed hockey rink/venue on wetland

Vernal Pools

Decades long field programs on Salamander migration, fresh water shrimp and wood frogs

Members have certified numerous vernal pools with the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP)

Flooding

Provided Senator Richard Tisei with water flow calculation for brook causing flooding on Washington Street Melrose

Worked with DCR in attempt to lessen impact of Beavers in Whittemore Brook

Heron Nesting Project

Provided materials for eagle scout construction of Great Heron nesting sites on Great Island in Spot Pond

Special Thanks to the MWRA for

Policing at Basins 1 and 2 preventing drowning

Removal of graffiti at Basins 1 and 2

This is an informal (and probably incomplete, but mainly accurate) list created by former Friends President Hue Holley