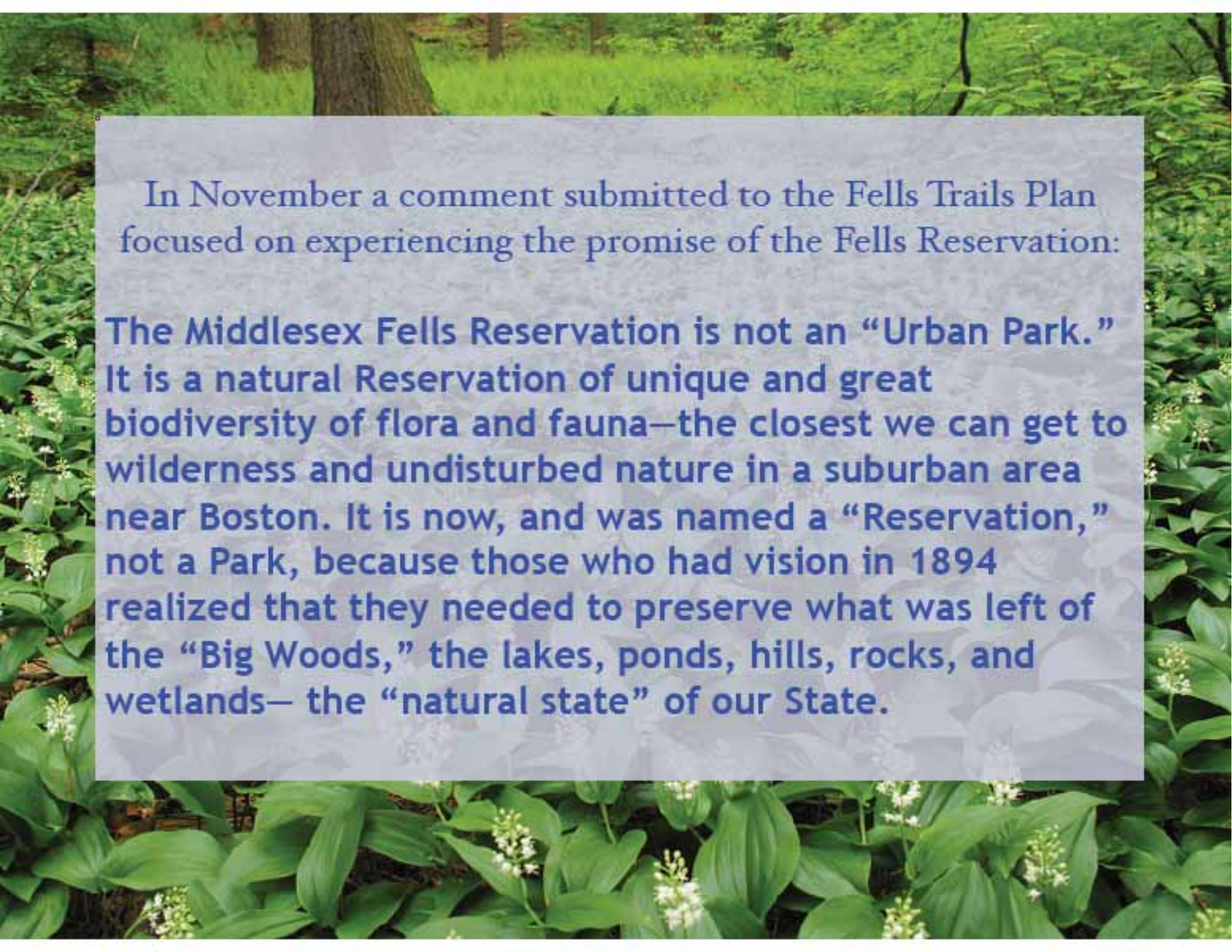




Experiencing FELLS NATURAL FEATURES

The following version of this presentation has been annotated with notes from the verbal presentation.





In November a comment submitted to the Fells Trails Plan focused on experiencing the promise of the Fells Reservation:

The Middlesex Fells Reservation is not an “Urban Park.” It is a natural Reservation of unique and great biodiversity of flora and fauna—the closest we can get to wilderness and undisturbed nature in a suburban area near Boston. It is now, and was named a “Reservation,” not a Park, because those who had vision in 1894 realized that they needed to preserve what was left of the “Big Woods,” the lakes, ponds, hills, rocks, and wetlands— the “natural state” of our State.

Keeping the promise of the Fells Reservation

In 1896, Middlesex Fells Reservation Landscape Architect Charles Eliot wrote "*Reservations of scenery are the cathedrals of the modern world.*"

The Fells Reservation was created for all generations to serve as an oasis of protected nature for escape from the noise and confusion of city life.

The question each generation asks is whether this gift is being honored and protected. Are we upholding the promise?

There are two questions:

1. Are the Fells natural features recognized and protected?
2. Can we experience these features in comfort and safety?

If the answer to both questions is 'yes' the Fells will continue to serve its function.

But if the answer to either question is 'no' people hoping to experience nature as a respite from city life will stop visiting the Fells.

Displacement will take place. The Fells will have been converted from a *Reservation* into an intensely used Recreation facility.







What promotes natural values and experiences in the Fells should be encouraged. What detracts from preservation of nature in the Fells, and ability of visitors to experience nature in safety should be identified and managed.

One family wrote to the DCR Fells Trails System plan that, “Right now, the children can run ahead for a little distance, enjoying freedom not easily experienced in today's world. If there are bikers on the trail, it would be too dangerous as a bike's approach is sometimes very quiet, but fast.” [J.P. 10/27/2010]

another letter:

“Dear Mr. Sullivan, As Medford residents, my family and I frequently hike throughout the Fells, and numerous times I have had to quickly push my young daughters (aged 4 & 6) from the trail because of approaching mountain bikes.” [W. P. 9/15/2010]

A photograph of a stream with yellow flowers and green foliage. The stream is in the foreground, and the background is filled with green grass and yellow flowers. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent grey box in the center of the image.

A comment letter from a Winchester resident stated that the writer,

“..was severely bitten once in the Fells, and I am afraid of some of the dogs. I do not appreciate being sniffed, lapped and barked at by even ‘safe’ dogs.”

[J. M., Winchester, Mass]



A white bird, possibly a egret or heron, is perched on a branch in a lush green forest. The bird is facing left. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the image, containing text in a dark blue font. The background is filled with green foliage and some purple flowers in the lower right corner.

Impacts to natural features from recreational usage was also noted by many.

One comment letter stated,

“The revelation that the Fells still has an unusual level of ecological diversity means that there is even more to protect; not only the tranquility and enjoyment of all those who come on foot is eroded, but the very basis for the stunning quality of the Fells is threatened when trails are widened into rutted boulevards and the denser woods are punctuated by spider trails, hardened by the constant impact of heavy, fast bikes under strong riders able to cover every section of the Fells in a brief visit.”

[A.B. 11/15/2010]





Identifying Fells Vernal Pools







bob cat@"brook's estate, medford"

a "clean photo" 6/26/0



Fells Rare Habitats



Garlic Mustard



Multiflora Rose





MOUNTAIN BIKE DESTRUCTION OF HIKING TRAIL



Bikes cut new path away from original hiking trail

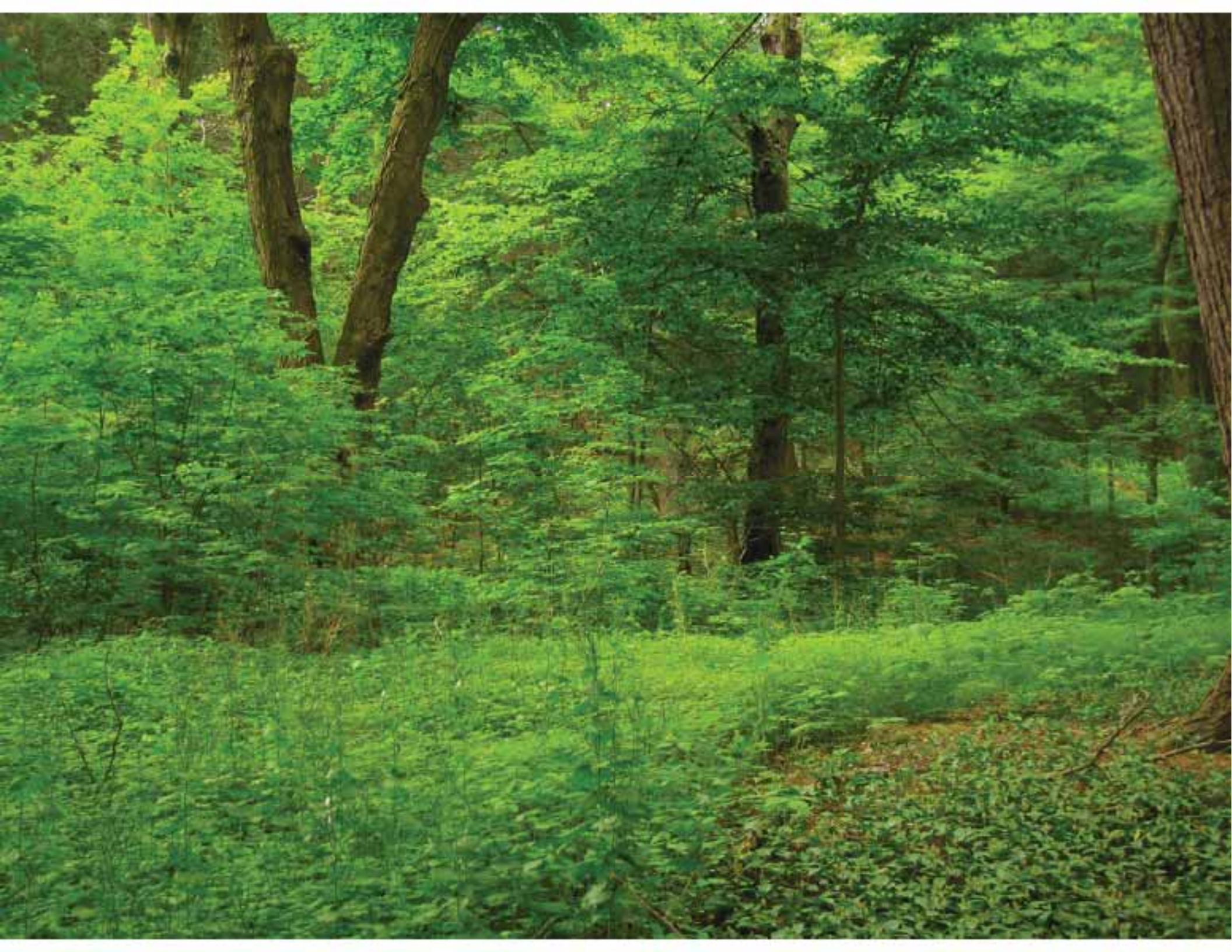
With no DCR enforcement of park regulations bikers ride wherever they choose, destroying and further fragmenting Fells landscape. Photo on the left shows effects of bikers cutting away from the fire road to carve brand new bike trail through forest. Photo on the right is on a *hiking* trail where bikes avoiding roots and rocks have ground out a wide new swath abutting the hiking trail.



Mountain bike jump constructed in middle of Lady Slipper grove



Non-bike use undamaged condition of Cross Fells Hiking Trail; proposed for conversion to bike use

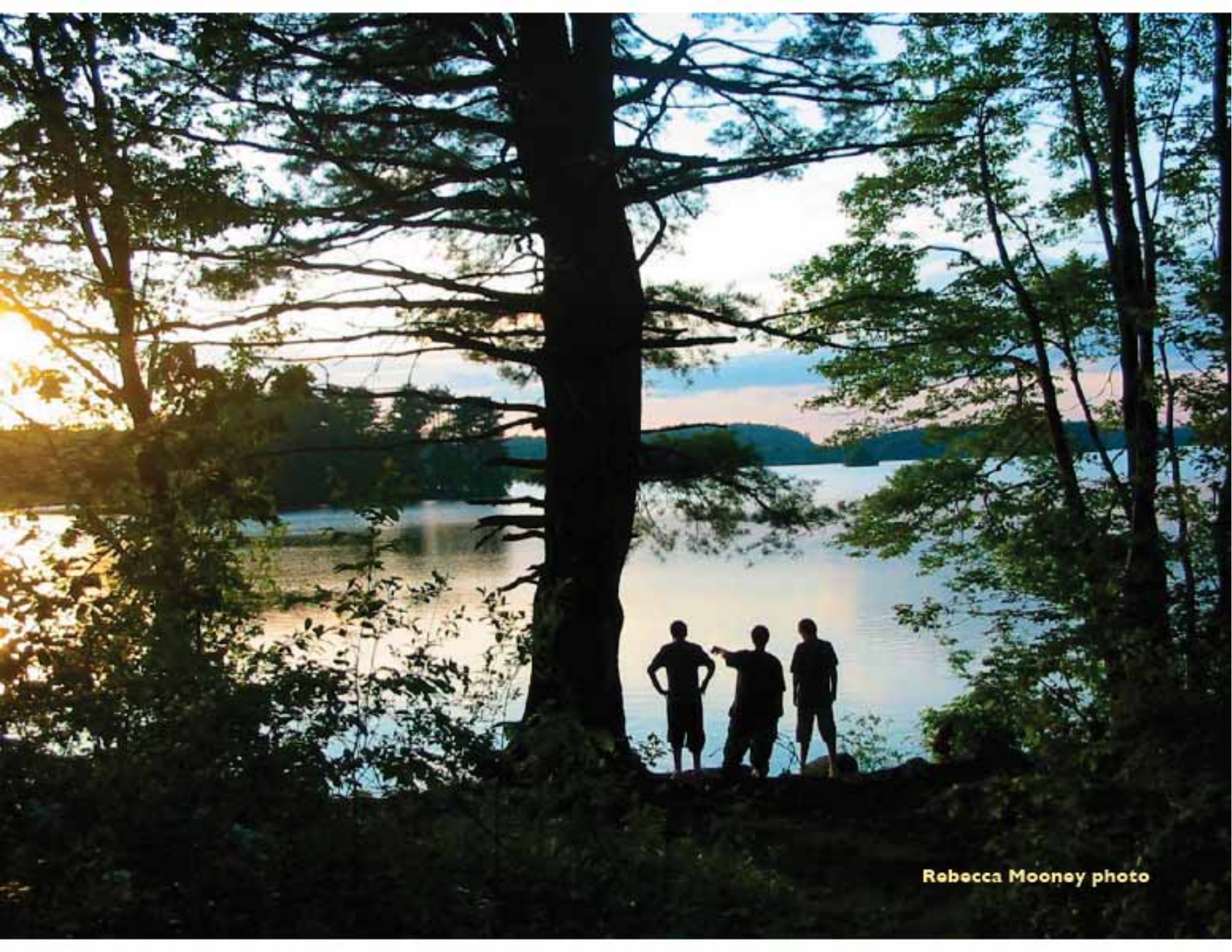


New Recreational Uses impacts on resources

MDC Policy Directive 506: 1989 and 1992: *“In working to preserve the precious natural and cultural resources found within MDC properties the MDC Reservation and Historic Sites Division management critically analyzed the impact potential of new or expanding recreational uses. The parameters that were considered in determining mountain bicycle use include: general sensitivity of soils, slopes, and habitats; public safety; significance of cultural resources; user group expectations; user experiences; public meeting comments; appropriateness of bicycle use; management concerns; and enforcement issues.”*

The basic premise was that to protect these resources and values a two-tiered trails system would allow bike riding and trail walking to occur in different places in the Fells.

The concerns which led to this policy are even greater today than twenty years ago, in great part because the promise that introduction of biking in the Fells would be accompanied by full enforcement powers has not been kept.



Rebecca Mooney photo