

DRAFT
Guidelines for
Massachusetts Stewardship Review of
Resource Management Plans

The Massachusetts Stewardship Council is responsible for reviewing and approving all DCR Regional Management Plans (RMPs). These guidelines will provide a framework for this review. They are not rigid standards or rules. On the contrary, they are designed to help, not limit the review, and to ensure that its scope is reasonably predictable.

The statute establishing the Council and the RMP process states that “management plans shall include guidelines for operations and land stewardship, provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources, and ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management.” This competition requires the DCR to balance competing priorities in a context characterized by ever scarcer resources. The Council’s role is not to second guess the Department’s decisions, but rather to ensure that the RMP considered all key factors and public concerns; to ensure that the Department provided ample opportunities for public input; and to ensure that the management decisions in one RMP are consistent with the priorities, coverage, and processes followed in other RMPs.

The Stewardship Council’s review should answer the following questions:

1. Did DCR provide an opportunity for public input; was this input considered; and was there an effort to reach out to stakeholders and to involve them in the process?
2. Did DCR make a reasonable attempt to identify relevant data, information, previous plans, and existing reports at the beginning of the RMP process? Additionally, did it try to obtain these materials and to use them in the development of the RMP?
3. Are the proposed uses recommended in the RMP consistent with DCR’s responsibility to protect important natural, scenic, cultural, and historic resources?

4. Does the RMP assess key safety issues, including the availability of sufficient enforcement capability?
5. Is the RMP consistent with DCR's decisions regarding uses of its resources in previous RMPs or other departmental planning processes?
6. Are the assessments of existing management, infrastructure, maintenance, and enforcement capabilities realistic—both in the short and long terms?
7. Is the RMP's assessment of future management requirements reasonable? Specifically, are they proportionate with the responsibilities recommended in the RMPs, and if not, does the RMP explicitly discuss this gap and what will be required to close it?

These questions may be modified over time as circumstances change and our information base improves, but these guidelines will result in a RMP review process that is more understandable and predictable.