



Resource Management Plan Lawton State Forest



Adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council Month, 2025

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Conservation and Resource Stewardship
Office of Cultural Resources

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Purpose

Resource Management Plans (RMPs) are foundational documents that identify a park, forest, or reservation's defining natural, cultural, and recreational resources and identify potential threats and opportunities to guide DCR's continued stewardship of the property and to inform future decisions about the property in a way that celebrates and preserves its identity.

RMPs are prepared for "all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department" (M.G.L. c. 21, § 2F). These 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." DCR finalizes RMPs following a public process and adoption by the DCR Stewardship Council. The contents of this RMP represent the best available information at the time of adoption by the Stewardship Council.

Mission and Core Principles

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, parkways, and over 100 National Register listed properties. The agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

DCR strives to be an exemplary leader in conservation and recreation. DCR's staff is passionate, dedicated, and continuously employs best practices, expertise, and a sense of place in carrying out the mission. The following core principles ground the agency in its work. For the benefit and well-being of all—people and the environment—DCR pledges to:

- Provide access to a diversity of outdoor recreational experiences and unique landscapes that is equitable, inclusive, and welcoming.
- Conserve lands, water, and forests by integrating science, research, and technical expertise into the management of our natural resources.
- Advance climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts by implementing sustainable practices and advancing resiliency across our infrastructure, assets, and resources.
- Support healthy communities by providing places for people to connect with nature and each other.
- Inspire generations of stewards by recognizing and honoring our legacy through partnerships, public engagement, and education.

Stewardship

DCR honors Indigenous peoples for their care, throughout many generations, of the land that DCR now stewards on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth. DCR embraces this legacy of stewardship, fostering a sense of shared responsibility by all people for protection of the waters, lands and living things for the enjoyment and appreciation of all.

To learn more about the DCR, its facilities, and programs please visit us at www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@mass.gov.



1. PROPERTY OVERVIEW

Characteristic	Value
Date Established	1987
Location	Athol
Ecoregion	Worcester Plateau
Watershed	Millers
DCR Region	Central
DCR District	Central Highlands
DCR Complex	Otter River
Management Forestry District	Mid-State
Fire Control District	North Worcester
Size (acres)	650.3
Boundary Length (miles)	8.2
Elevation - Minimum (feet)	693.7
Elevation - Maximum (feet)	1,063.4
Environmental Justice (acres)	0.0
Estimated Annual Attendance (2023)	Unknown
Interpretive Programs (# programs, 2023)	0
Interpretive Programs (# attendees, 2023)	0

2. LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Acres
Parkland	0.0
Reserve	0.0
Woodland	394.7
No Designation	255.6

3. REGULATORY DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Acres
None Identified	N/A

4. LONG-TERM AGREEMENTS

Agreement	Expiration Year
None Identified	N/A

5. CONCESSIONS

Concession Type
None

6. PARTNERS & FRIENDS

Group(s)
None

7. FEATURES OF INTEREST

Feature
Historical farm landscape features
Scenic stream (1) and ponds (3)

8. NATURAL RESOURCES

Resource	Value
Tree Canopy (acres)	634.2
Rivers and Streams (miles)	2.2
Open Water (acres)	3.8
Wetlands (acres)	6.8
Certified Vernal Pools (#)	0
Potential Vernal Pools (#)	7
State-Listed Species (# Regulatory)	0
State-Listed Species (# Non-Regulatory)	1
Federally Listed Species (#)	0
Aquatic Invasive Plants (# known species)	1
Terrestrial Invasive Plants (# known species)	4

9. FOREST MANAGEMENT (SINCE 2012)

Management Objective	Acres
Maintain and enhance species and structural diversity	18.4

10. HISTORY OF WILDFIRES AND CONDITIONS INFLUENCING FUTURE WILDFIRES

Wildfire Attribute	Value or Characteristic
Number of wildfires on property; 2019–2023	0
Acres burned by wildfires on property; 2019–2023	0.0
Number of wildfires in Fire Control District; 2019–2023	294
Acres burned by wildfires in Fire Control District; 2019–2023	1,169.6
Type of Wildland-Urban Interface	Intermix
Predicted rate of spread, based on Fire Behavior Fuel Model 13	Not easily spread

11. NATURAL HAZARDS

Hazard Type	Acres
Flood (1.0%-chance)	0.3
Flood (0.2%-chance)	0.3
Hurricane Inundation (Cat. 1)	N/A
Hurricane Inundation (Cat. 4)	N/A

12. CLIMATE CHANGE (BY 2070)

Type of Change	Amount of Change
Increase in annual days over 90° F	>30
Change in annual maximum daily rainfall (inches)	>10
Massachusetts Coastal Flood Risk Model area of inundation (acres)	N/A

13. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Resource Type	#
Archaeological	0
Historic - Total MACRIS Listed	0
Historic - National Register Listed	0
Historic - National Historic Landmark	0

14. RECREATION RESOURCES

Resource	#
Trail System	1

15. RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Activity
Bicycling, mountain
Dog walking, on-leash
Hiking/Walking

16. ROADS AND TRAILS

Metric	Value
Roads - Unpaved (miles)	0.0
Roads - Paved (miles)	1.4
Forest Roads - Unpaved (miles)	4.2
Forest Roads - Paved (miles)	0.0
Trails - Unpaved (miles)	1.1
Trails - Paved (miles)	0.0
Trails - Unauthorized (miles)	0.2
Trail Density (miles/acre)	0.008
Area of Impact (acres)	343.8

17. PARKING

Parking Resources	#
Lots	2
Parking Spaces - Total	4
Parking Spaces - Accessible (HP)	0
Parking Spaces - Other	4

INTRODUCTION

Lawton State Forest (Lawton or the Forest) is located in the Town of Athol, approximately 30 miles northwest of Worcester and 3 miles north of Route 2. Athol is a historical manufacturing community and contains Environmental Justice (EJ) populations that are within approximately 0.5 mile of the Forest. Otter River State Park and Warwick State Forest are approximately 5 miles east and 7 miles west of Lawton, respectively. Routes 2, 32, and 68 provide easy access to the Forest, which is bounded to the east by Chestnut Hill Road and transected by Willis and Townsend roads. Neighborhoods surrounding the Forest are sparsely developed with residential housing, agricultural properties, and permanently protected conservation lands consisting of Skyfields Arboretum (headquarters of the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, or MGLCT) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Tully Lake. Part of the over-2,000-acre Millers River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is on the east side of Chestnut Hill Avenue, 0.3 miles from the east edge of the Forest.

The Forest is on land shaped by generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous inhabitants. Past and present Indigenous residents embody fluid, relational connections to the places and spaces now known as Lawton State Forest. Groups and individuals, including Indigenous peoples known as the Wabanaki, are recorded in available documentation (Native Land Digital 2023) as having relationships to this place over seasons and generations. Following Indigenous peoples' dispossession, the Massachusetts General Court in 1733 granted lands that make up Athol as the Payquage plantation. Athol was incorporated in 1762. As part of a later land division amongst the town proprietors, land that makes up much of the Forest was granted to Moses Hill in 1766. The extended Hill-Lawton family would own and farm portions of this land until its acquisition by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) in 1987. The property became known as the Lawton Farm circa 1890 after one of Hill's descendants married Oren M. Lawton. The couple's descendent Robert H. Lawton began commercial tree farming on the property in the 1930s and, in 1948, enrolled the farm in the American Tree Farm System. This was the first Tree Farm in Massachusetts and in New England (Anon. 1948, Merrifield 1976). The American Tree Farm System was established by the National Lumber Manufacturers Association in 1941 to encourage self-regulation of private timberlands and as a response to conservationists' calls to nationalize private timberlands. In 1986, to prevent the farm from being developed, the Town of Athol and the MGLCT acquired the approximately 369-acre farm (excepting a 5-acre parcel containing the residence) under Chapter 61 right of first refusal. MGLCT in turn sold the land to DEM, which purchased an additional 75 acres at the Forest in 2001 (Skarabis 1986). Since 1997, the Forest has been managed under the DEM's Guidelines for Operations and Land Stewardship (GOALS): State Forests & Parks in the Northeastern Connecticut Valley Region (DEM 1997). In 2022, DCR added approximately 186 acres to the north edge of the Forest, creating a connection to USACE's Tully Lake property.

The Forest is situated on the westerly and northerly slopes of Chestnut Hill, a north-south running ridgeline that rises approximately 500 feet above the nearby Tully and Millers River valleys. The property is undeveloped with DCR infrastructure (excepting trails and forest roads), has an undulating topography that encompasses two of the summits of Chestnut Hill, and is covered with a mixture of hemlock, white pine, and mixed hardwoods. An unnamed stream (a tributary of the Tully River) runs north-south through the property and there are two unnamed ponds and several swamps and potential vernal pools within the Forest. The Forest's land use history is evident through multiple cultural landscape features, including a domestic cellar hole (possibly the Hill-Lawton Farmstead), stone animal pen and boundary

walls, rock piles, farm roads, and white pine and Norway spruce plantations. The trails and forest roads running through this landscape offer diverse opportunities for year-round passive recreation. The varied resource types and intimate scenery of Lawton State Forest create a pleasant place to visit for a short walk or exploratory hike.

PARK IDENTITY

Lawton State Forest provides valuable open space close to the developed urban-industrial core of Athol and conserves a locally important historical agricultural landscape. The Forest's identity is derived from its location in an upland portion of Athol and the surrounding Worcester Plateau Ecoregion, its history and current status as a managed forest, and the landscape site features that illustrate its agricultural history. All future activities and improvements should, consistent with the property's Woodland Landscape Designation, provide for responsible forest management and passive recreation opportunities while respecting and preserving the unique historical associations that the property possesses.

DEFINING RESOURCES AND VALUES

Resources and values that define the Forest are related to its historical agricultural use and to its scenic natural and cultural resources. They include:

- The Forest is within a larger continuum of conserved lands that provides recreational and habitat connectivity and preserves scenic landscapes in a corridor extending from developed portions of Athol to Tully Lake and the Millers River WMA.
- Preservation of agricultural heritage. The Hill-Lawton Farm within the Forest was under continuous ownership of one family since its establishment as a farm in the 18th century. Additionally, the Forest preserves open space and scenic vistas within the Chestnut Hill Avenue heritage landscape, which is significant in Athol's community development and agricultural history (DCR et al. 2008: 21–25).
- Responsible and historic forest management. The Hill-Lawton Farm's tree plantations and naturally regenerated forests reflect the property's past use as a Tree Farm (the first in New England) and the Tree Farm is connected to DCR's history as a conservation agency.
- The Forest provides an important local resource for passive recreation. Trails and forest roads provide opportunities for scenic walks past remnants of former agriculture use, through hemlock woods, and along cascading streams and pond shores. The unnamed ponds (including a former farm pond) provide intimate views and opportunities for wildlife viewing.
- Equitable recreation access. The Forest provides recreational amenities to and enhances environmental quality and equity for an EJ community that is less than 0.5 miles from the property.

STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Statements of Significance describe the importance or distinctiveness of a place and its resources (National Park Service 1998). These statements reflect current scholarly inquiry and interpretation and go beyond a simple listing of resources to include contextual information that makes the facts more meaningful. When developing significance statements, the following criteria are considered:

- The property's significance at the time of its establishment.

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- How the property, or society's understanding of the property, has changed since its acquisition that makes it significant or unique within the state park system today.
- The property's role in recreation and its importance to the community it supports, particularly regarding activities that are unique to that property.

For park planning, these statements focus management actions on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place. For interpretive planning, they comprise the information upon which the interpretive themes and overall program are built.

The following Statements of Significance have been identified for Lawton State Forest. The sequence of these statements does not reflect their level of significance.

- Prior to being established as a State Forest, the Lawton Tree Farm was the first Tree Farm in New England. As a Tree Farm, the site was managed with the goal to produce forest products while protecting water, wildlife, fish, and other environmental values.
- Scientific forestry has been the basis for the management of the site since the property became a Tree Farm. These practices focus on the long-term cultivation of forests to achieve a sustainable harvest and aim for long-term stewardship over short-term profits.
- The Forest serves as an educational site being used to teach the principles of scientific forestry to the public. Partnering with the MGLCT, the site is used to illustrate what happens as a result of forest management over time.
- The property is tied to the north to Tully Lake and the MGLCT Skyfields Arboretum. With the Miller River WMA and Bearsden Conservation Area across the road, the property is part of a bridge of undeveloped land for wildlife, habitat, and people.
- With its transition from a forest to a dairy farm, to a Tree Farm, and most recently to a state forest, the site provides an illustration of Massachusetts' land use history and forest succession. Evidence of previous uses on the property is apparent through the domestic cellar hole, cart paths, old pastures, and stone walls.

UNIFYING THEME

The Unifying Theme is a statement that ties a property's stories together and shapes the overall interpretive message that DCR wants to share with visitors in their experience at the property. The theme provides an overarching conclusion for visitors to contemplate (Ham 2013) and answers the question "so what?" The theme guides all interpretation for the park, both personal (i.e., formal and informal interactions with visitors) and non-personal (e.g., exhibits, signage, brochures).

The Unifying Theme for Lawton State Forest is:

Perhaps surprisingly, resource management and conservation go hand in hand.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Lawton State Forest provides a variety of visitor experiences, including the following:

- **Virtual Experience.** Potential visitors will find little information about Lawton on DCR's web site. The "Find a Park" tool (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-park>) identifies the Forest's location

and lists Hiking/Walking as activities that visitors may enjoy here. The Otter River State Forest web page does not list Lawton as being one of its “related parks.”

- **Entering the Park.** Visitors enter the Forest via Townsend or Willis Roads. There is no formal gateway, although a Main Identification Sign is sited on the east side of Townsend Road within the property. Informal parking on the roads’ shoulders is located at several trailheads in the Forest. The largest of these is a dirt pull-off located approximately 500 feet north of the Willis Road-Townsend Road intersection.
- **Trail-based Passive Recreation.** Visitors seeking recreational opportunities may access a modest trail network that passes through the woodlands and adjacent to historical farmstead features, providing visitors the opportunity for a light hike and Forest exploration.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following information identifies potential threats to the park’s natural and cultural resources and identifies opportunities to enhance their protection and stewardship. Although recreation is not considered a resource under statute (M.G.L. c. 21, § 2F), it is included below because recreation is an important part of the park-going experience, helps define a park’s values, and is a key part of assessing the consistency of activities taking place in the Commonwealth’s forests, parks, and reservations.

Threats and opportunities identified below are used to inform the development of management recommendations. Potential recommendations must meet prioritization criteria to be included in the Priority Recommendations table (Table 19, page 26).

Natural Resources

Threats

- The following five Invasive Species have been identified at Lawton State Forest: common buckthorn, common reed, glossy buckthorn, Japanese knotweed, and multiflora rose. Purple loosestrife may also be present. These invasives have been identified in the Forest by operations staff. Invasive species may negatively impact both the ecological integrity and biodiversity of the Forest.
- The Forest was not field surveyed for the 2017 Invasive Plant Management Plan: Central Region (BSC Group 2017). Consequently, there is no comprehensive information on the presence or distribution of invasive plants in Lawton State Forest. Such information is needed to determine if any sensitive resources are being impacted by invasive plants.
- Hemlock woolly adelgid and elongate hemlock scale, both invasive insects that impact forest health, are present in the Forest’s eastern hemlock stands.
- The loss of hemlock stands due to invasive insects threatens the health of an unnamed stream in the southwest quadrant of the Forest (south of Willis Road). This stream has been identified as Coldwater Fisheries Resource by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) (Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information (MassGIS) 2021).
- Because the Forest is unstaffed and in proximity to developed portions of Athol, unauthorized trail uses and trail construction have occurred and may occur in the future. There are several unauthorized trails present on the property, including an off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail that may connect to lands of a private abutter. Construction of trails without authorization or applicable

regulatory review may threaten habitat of species protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA), natural communities, and/or ecosystem functions.

- Unauthorized OHV use and trail clearing (under investigation at the time this RMP was drafted) in the forest is impacting seasonal wetlands and streams, causing some soil erosion and compaction, and creating sedimentation in adjacent wetlands, streams, and potential vernal pools. One unnamed stream near OHV trails is designated a Department of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) Coldwater Fish Resource, which hosts species more sensitive to water quality (MassGIS 2021). Some trails that are used by OHVs are ungated.
- Unauthorized dumping sometimes occurs in the Forest, threatening natural resources and communities and also the experience of visitors.
- There is at least one unapproved geocache in the Forest. Inappropriately located geocaches may threaten sensitive natural resources.

Opportunities

- Approximately 255.6 acres of the Forest has no Landscape Designation (DCR 2012). Assigning Landscape Designations to these portions of the Forest could help with management of associated natural resources and ensure management consistent with DCR properties statewide.
- The Forest is located within the Quabbin to Cardigan Initiative's (Q2C) project area. This initiative is a public-private collaborative effort to conserve the Monadnock Highlands of north-central Massachusetts and western New Hampshire. The Forest's location within the project area offers opportunities to participate in agency partnerships, grants, and land acquisitions in support of DCR's and the Q2C's mutual conservation and recreation goals (Q2C 2023).
- There are small, but strategically significant, opportunities for acquisition of land or easements that could enhance the Forest's connectivity to other conserved lands. These potential acquisitions would be particularly beneficial for recreational trail connections.
- There is an opportunity (in development at the time this RMP was written; in consultation with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science) to protect the health of the unnamed stream (a Coldwater Fisheries Resource) in the southwest quadrant of the Forest by implementing forest resiliency measures via forest management.
- DCR collaborates informally with the MGLCT on forest stewardship and education activities. In the future, there may be an opportunity to formalize this work in a partnership agreement.
- The history and persistence of the Forest as a certified Tree Farm presents a valuable opportunity to demonstrate and interpret the Tree Farm system and sustainable forestry management practices to the general public and woodland owners.
- Some of the seven potential vernal pools may "support rich communities of vertebrates and invertebrates" (MassWildlife 2009) and serve as important habitat components for other wildlife. Surveying and certifying these pools (DCR (n.d.a) and MassWildlife (2009)), as appropriate, may help better protect these animals.
- The westerly portion of this Forest is identified as habitat for a bird species protected under the MESA and designated as a Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) Species of Special Concern. This habitat is Non-Regulatory, which is based on the presence of suitable habitat

for state-listed species; there is no associated mapped Priority Habitat. On state lands, both are protected under the MESA (321 CMR 10.00). Requesting pre-filing consultation with the NHESP for “all works, projects, or activities” in the Forest, regardless of location in or out of Priority Habitat, will ensure continued protection of this habitat and compliance with the MESA.

- Portions of the new (northerly) end of the Forest were subject to forest management activities within the last 10 years by previous, private owners and are now a young forest. There may be opportunities to enhance songbird and pollinator habitat by using an uneven aged forest management approach here and in other portions of the Forest.
- Because of the recent acquisition, there is an opportunity to work with the NHESP to survey this new land area for the presence of any Priority Natural Communities and/or habitat for MESA-protected species.

Cultural Resources

Threats

- Archaeological resources in the Forest may be threatened by erosion from natural weather events and unauthorized recreational activities such as OHV use or trail creation by recreationists.
- The significance and features of the historical agricultural landscape of the Forest have not been fully researched and surveyed. Management activities, particularly ground disturbing activities, may negatively impact this landscape if undocumented features are inadvertently damaged or destroyed.
- There is at least one unapproved geocache in the Forest. Inappropriately located geocaches may threaten sensitive cultural resources.

Opportunities

- Approximately 255.6 acres of the Forest has no Landscape Designation (DCR 2012). Assigning Landscape Designations to these portions of the Forest could help with management of associated cultural resources and ensure management consistent with DCR properties statewide.
- Conducting a reconnaissance survey for ancient (12,000–450 years before present) and historical archaeological resources could clarify the archaeological sensitivity and extent of modern period disturbance when the property was developed as a farm.
- There is an undocumented domestic cellar hole on the property, possibly the Hill-Lawton Farmstead, along with multiple historical agricultural landscape elements. Researching the historical associations of these cultural resources may provide opportunities for the interpretation and protection of the Hill-Lawton farm’s history as it relates to the settlement of Athol and the farm’s role in the Tree Farm movement.
- The Forest’s history as the Commonwealth’s first Tree Farm, combined with the DCR’s active management of the property as Woodlands, provides a unique opportunity to interpret the history and principles of science-based Forestry practices and the related Tree Farm movement.
- The Forest is located approximately 15 miles east of the Turners Falls Sacred Ceremonial Hill Site, a “highly significant Native American “prayer hill” containing stone features” (Matthews 2008). This property has been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register (Matthews 2008). The “site is considered by Tribal authorities to be part of a ceremonial district” (Shutesbury Historical Commission (SHC) 2021). Although the boundaries of this district “are presently undetermined,” its

approximate boundary is “a 16-mile radius around the Turners Falls Site” (SHC 2021). Because of the Forest’s location within the potential district, there is a possibility that Indigenous features occur within the Forest.

- The Town of Athol has adopted the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act and all roads adjacent to the Forest are designated scenic roads; as authorized under M.G.L. c. 40, §15C (DCR et al. 2008: 30). The DCR’s preservation of forest edges (i.e. buffer strips) and stone walls maintains the scenic character of these public ways.

Recreation

Threats

- There is limited official information available on Lawton. DCR’s webpage does not include information on the Forest, making it difficult for potential visitors to become aware of the property and its recreational opportunities.
- The Forest’s Main Identification sign does not meet current DCR graphics standards.
- There is no formal parking lot for the property, hindering public access. Parking is only available on the road shoulders or in front of Forest gates.
- There is no official trail map of the property, making it challenging to navigate the Forest’s trail network.
- Forest roads and trails are not cleared of natural obstructions such as fallen trees, which impinges on visitors’ experience of the forest.
- Trails in the Forest are not signed or blazed consistently, making it difficult for users to navigate authorized trails and stay off of unofficial trails.
- The existing trail accessing the new, northern land parcel crosses private land. Private landowners may choose to close their lands to Forest users, which would make the northern parcel inaccessible by trail and would threaten trail connectivity between the Forest and the USACE’s Tully Lake property and the Tully Trail (a regional loop trail that passes through the Tully Lake property).
- There is extensive unauthorized OHV use within the Forest that damages the trail system.
- Unauthorized camping sometimes occurs in the Forest and may negatively impact natural or cultural resources or create unsightly conditions for visitors.
- A local recreationist association has been conducting unpermitted trails work (e.g., blazing, vegetation management, bridge construction) in the Forest. This work threatens the Forest’s natural and cultural resources, as well as the agency’s intended recreation experience.

Opportunities

- Adding a Lawton State Forest web page to DCR’s web site would allow potential visitors to become aware of the Forest, its resources, and associated recreation opportunities.
- Because of the Forest’s close proximity (approximately 0.5 miles) to an Environmental Justice (EJ) Community, there may be opportunities to advance environmental justice and equity via DCR’s Environmental Justice Strategy (see pages 79–88 in EEA 2024), in alignment with the EEA’s EJ Policy (EEA 2021) and the Executive Order on Environmental Justice (No. 552) (Patrick 2014).

- The Main Identification Sign does not conform to current DCR graphics standards. There is an opportunity to improve the Forest's image and enhance DCR brand consistency by replacing the panel.
- There is an opportunity to improve user access and enjoyment of the Forest by creating a formal parking area with a Welcome Wayside and ensuring that trails disseminating from this area provide connections to the greater trail network. An existing dirt pull-off, established as a log landing, on the west side of Townsend Road and north of Willis Road may be an appropriate location for this amenity, if designed to be consistent with forestry activities.
- Opportunities exist to improve the Forest's trail system to enhance visitors' experiences by creating more loop trails on the property and adding signs and blazes that follow the DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual (DCR 2019). Trail improvements could also be coordinated with the interpretive potential of the property.
- As any future trail improvements are planned, there is an opportunity to identify possibilities for accessible trails at the Forest to fulfil DCR's obligations under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The trail system of the Forest does not connect to the Millers River WMA, although the two conserved areas could be connected via existing public ways. Linking the trail systems of these areas would expand recreational opportunities for users.
- The neighboring MGLCT Skyfields Arboretum provides an opportunity for collaborative partnerships on maintenance, programming, and outreach activities in the Forest. A trail connection exists between the two properties and enhances this opportunity for collaboration.
- There is an opportunity to provide recreational connectivity between Lawton State Forest and the USACE Tully Lake facility, along with the regional Tully Trail. An existing trail in the newly acquired parcel at the north end of the Forest could be extended to connect to the trails system of the Tully Lake property.
- Providing interpretation of the Forest's history as it relates to the settlement of Athol and its use as a Tree Farm would educate users about this unique property.
- There is an opportunity to prevent continued unauthorized activities (i.e., camping, third-party trail maintenance and construction work, vegetation clearing, soil disturbance, OHV use, dumping) in the Forest by continuing current measures and additional enforcement actions, as needed and appropriate to the activity and level of violation:
 - Increased monitoring by Rangers and operations staff;
 - Involvement of Environmental Police Officers;
 - Addition of gates or other physical barriers to OHVs;
 - Use of signage alerting visitors to unauthorized uses; and
 - Legal action.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change impacts nearly every aspect of DCR's properties, from ecosystem health, to infrastructure, to recreation. (See DCR 2024 for an overview of these impacts.) The Department is actively working to mitigate and adapt to current and future impacts through such actions as forest

management; decarbonizing DCR's buildings, vehicles, and power equipment; protecting wetlands; and using nature-based solutions to minimize stormwater impacts. Information on these, and other, efforts is incorporated into RMPs as available and appropriate.

Any discussion of climate change requires a shared understanding of terminology. Because of this, this RMP section adopts commonly accepted terms to the greatest extent possible. In general, climate-related technical terms used in this RMP are as defined in the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2021). Exceptions to this are the terms Adaptation, Risk, and Sensitivity, which are used as defined in DCR's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA; Weston and Sampson 2022).

DCR manages its forests to provide a range of ecosystem services such as recreation, clean water, wood commodities, and wildlife habitat (DCR 2020). For ecosystems under its management, DCR carefully considers both their vulnerability to climate change and their ability to mitigate the effects of climate change by storing carbon in ecosystems and harvested wood products. Several approaches are used to monitor DCR forests and to design forest management strategies to adapt to climate change and provide ecosystem services. (See Swanston et al. (2016) for information on adaptation strategies and approaches associated with DCR's forest management.) Established in 1957, DCR's Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) system uses a network of more than 2,000 permanent plots on which repeated measurements are taken on an ongoing basis. The CFI measures the status, size, and health of over 100,000 trees; other vegetation; down woody material; and the forest floor. (See DCR 2022 for additional information on the CFI system.) This information helps DCR understand at a strategic scale the current character, condition, and trends of forest ecosystems under its care. DCR also uses operational inventory to help plan specific treatments and evaluate their outcomes. Using these different scales of information, remotely sensed data, and local and regional external expertise, DCR plans projects that help its stands, forests, and other lands adapt to climate change and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. The conservation and science-based management of forest lands are an essential element to ensuring crucial carbon storage and advancing climate change resilience (EEA 2024). For additional information on the relationship between DCR's forest management practices and climate change, please see pages 77–85 in Massachusetts Forest Action Plan 2020 (DCR 2020) and Managing Our Forests...For Carbon Benefits (DCR 2023).

The Department is actively assessing and addressing the vulnerability of its properties and facilities to the impacts of climate change. In 2022, DCR conducted a CCVA (Weston and Sampson 2022). Findings from this CCVA are being used by DCR to enhance park operations and maintenance, inform resilient investment, and provide a framework for hazard mitigation and climate adaptation for natural resources, cultural resources, recreational activities, buildings, facilities, and other infrastructure. Property-specific climate change information from the CCVA is included in the Climate Change (by 2070) table (Table 12) at the beginning of this RMP. An overview of the impacts of climate change on DCR facilities and operations is presented in the DCR Climate Impacts Story Map (DCR 2024).

Climate Exposure and Impacts

A summary of the ways in which the Commonwealth's natural, cultural, and recreational resources may be impacted by climate change is provided below. During the preparation of RMPs some resources may be identified as having particularly high exposure and/or sensitivity to the anticipated hazards or consequences of climate change. When this occurs, these resources and the projected impacts to them

are described. In some instances, the potential impacts of climate change on a given resource are not well understood. When this occurs, only exposure is discussed.

Natural Resources—General Impacts

Climate change affects temperature, precipitation, and atmospheric and ocean chemistry, which in turn directly and indirectly affect the natural environment, including the plants, animals, and natural communities of DCR's forests, parks, and reservations.

Climate is known to influence the presence, absence, distribution, reproductive success, and survival of both native and non-native plants (Finch et al. 2021). Native northern and boreal species, including balsam fir, red spruce, and black spruce may fare worse under future conditions, but other species may benefit from the projected changes in climate (Janowiak et al. 2018). Some non-native invasive species will be affected by climate change while others will remain unaffected, and some non-invasive non-native species are likely to become invasive (Finch et al. 2021). In general, elevated temperature and CO₂ enrichment associated with climate change increases the performance of non-native plants more strongly than the performance of native plants (Liu et al. 2017). Climate change may result in the presence of new non-native invasive plants on a property, and changes to the distribution and/or abundance of invasives already present on a property.

Exposure to a changing climate affects wildlife in a variety of ways. For animals that live in or near aquatic environments, "changes in habitat and hydrological regimes are expected to shift their abundance and distribution" (Isaak et al. 2018: 89). Impacts to terrestrial animals are expected to be highly variable (Halofsky et al. 2018) but may be considered to fall into the following four categories: 1. habitat loss and fragmentation; 2. physiological sensitivities (i.e., innate characteristics that influence the ability to cope with changing temperature and precipitation conditions); 3. alterations in the timing of species' life cycles; and 4. indirect effects (e.g., disruption of ecological relationships) (Friggens et al. 2018). Although all Northeast wildlife are exposed to hazards associated with climate change, some groups, "including montane birds, salamanders, cold-adapted fish, and freshwater mussels, could be particularly affected by changing temperatures, precipitation, sea and lake level, and ocean processes" (MassWildlife 2015: 357). In addition, it is the position of the NHESP that state-listed species and Priority Natural Communities are likely to be highly sensitive to climate change and that all state-listed species will be negatively affected by hydrologic changes, changes in water, soil, and air temperature, and changes in forest composition.

Natural Resources—Property-Specific Exposure and Impacts

An unnamed stream in the southwest quadrant of the Forest, extending from Willis Road south to the Forest boundary, has been identified as a Coldwater Fisheries Resource by MassWildlife. Such streams provide important habitat for coldwater species, which are typically more sensitive than other species to alterations in stream flow, water quality, and temperature (MassGIS 2021).

Climate change may cause some vernal pools to dry earlier in the season than they have historically, potentially interfering with amphibian life cycles and negatively impacting associated wildlife (Cartwright et al. 2022). Similar impacts may occur at the Forest's potential vernal pools that function as vernal pools.

Responses of Massachusetts' invasive plants (i.e., those categorized as Invasive by the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG) (n.d.)) to a changing climate are largely unknown. However,

sufficient information exists to project the likely future trend of common reed. Lineages of common reed in New England exhibit strong growth and photosynthetic response to elevated temperature and increased levels of CO₂, such as those associated with climate change (Eller et al. 2017). Because of this, it is anticipated that common reed will further expand at Lawton State Forest and throughout Massachusetts.

Cultural Resources—General Impacts

Climate change may negatively affect cultural resources, their preservation, and maintenance (EEA 2022; International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Working Group 2019; Rockman et al. 2016: 3, 18; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Center 2007). In Massachusetts, cultural resources may be exposed to the following natural phenomena that are correlated with adverse impacts: higher annual average temperature (especially in winter), increased numbers of freeze-thaw cycles, increased precipitation intensity, higher relative humidity, higher wind speeds, an increase in severe storm events, increased numbers and severity of wildfires, more severe seasonal droughts, increase in number and severity of inland flood events, increased coastal flooding and erosion, increased probability of landslides, changes in groundwater levels, shifts in native and invasive species distribution, performance, and phenology; and changes in oceanic and atmospheric chemistry (Rockman et al. 2016; Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2023: 5.1-31–5.1-61).

The phenomena listed above may produce a variety of adverse impacts to Massachusetts' cultural resources. Sensitivity and potential impacts vary based on resource category (i.e., archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, ethnographic landscapes and sites, and buildings and structures). Resource-specific factors such as location, design, materials, condition, etc. will also influence sensitivity and consequent impacts. All categories of cultural resources may be subject to complete or partial destruction through wildfire, inland flooding, sea level rise, storm surge, or landslides. Additionally, these resource categories may be subject to other types of impacts, as follows. Archaeological sites may have site stratigraphy disrupted by changes in hydrography, may suffer accelerated decomposition of artifacts and features, and may be impacted inadvertently during disaster response. Cultural landscapes may lose plantings due to a variety of stressors (e.g., drought or flood, pests, soil salinity), may be infiltrated by invasives, may be eroded by surface runoff, may experience more rapid deterioration of hardscaping and site furnishings, and may be damaged by high wind or heavy snow events. Ethnographic landscapes, traditional cultural places, and associated communities (including Indigenous peoples) may suffer both tangible and intangible impacts such as loss or diminishment of natural species used for food, ceremony, or medicine; alterations in timing of hunts, etc.; increased difficulty of vulnerable subgroups (e.g., the elderly) to perform outdoor tasks; and a loss of cultural knowledge associated with resources and practices. Buildings and structures may be damaged or destroyed by high wind or heavy snow events, suffer accelerated deterioration through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., elevated humidity, chemical reactions, destructive pests and organisms), may be destabilized by hydrological changes, or be damaged by inadequate gutters or drainage systems (ICOMOS Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Working Group 2019: 73–89; Rockman et al. 2016: 20–24). (See Rockman et al. 2016: 19–24 for a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on cultural resources.)

Cultural Resources—Property-Specific Exposure and Impacts

No cultural resources with known elevated exposure or sensitivity to potential consequences of climate change were identified at this property.

Recreation—General Impacts

Outdoor recreation and park visitation are dependent on weather and climate and will be affected by a warming climate (Wilkins and Horne 2024). Higher temperatures positively affect participation in most outdoor activities, except snow-based activities (Wilkins and Horne 2024). “Winter is warming substantially faster than other seasons, and winter warming is especially pronounced in the...Northeastern United States” (Wilkins and Horne 2024: 15). Exposure to this climate change phenomenon is projected to significantly reduce the length of winter recreation seasons for downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling, decreasing recreational opportunities and causing substantial economic impacts (Wobus et al. 2017). Whitewater rafting, primitive area use, and hunting are also projected to be negatively impacted by exposure changing weather patterns associated with climate change (Askew and Bowker 2018). Although “coldwater fishing habitat is expected to decline under a warming climate, which will likely result in fewer fishing days,” overall fishing participation in the Northeast is projected to rise “due to the more favorable temperatures” (Wilkins and Horne 2024: 11). Horseback riding on trails, boating, swimming, and visiting interpretive sites are also expected to see higher participation in the Northeast under climate change (Askew and Bowker 2018). Temperature preferences of campers indicate that the “number of ideal days” for camping will also increase (Wilkins and Horne 2024: 13). Participation in biking is also projected to increase, especially in the winter and shoulder months (Wilkins and Horne 2024: 13). Climate change may also impact outdoor recreation through increased impacts to recreation infrastructure (e.g., flooding impacts), and increased exposure to disease vectors (e.g., mosquitoes and ticks), longer pollen seasons, and heat-related illnesses (O’Toole et al. 2019).

Recreation—Property-Specific Exposure and Impacts

No recreation resources or activities with known elevated exposure or sensitivity to potential consequences of climate change were identified at this property.

APPLIED LAND STEWARDSHIP ZONING

DCR assesses the appropriate uses and stewardship of its properties at two spatial scales: the landscape level and the property level.

Landscape Designation

In 2012, DCR engaged in a comprehensive system-wide assessment of lands managed by its Division of State Parks and Recreation, designating them as Reserve, Woodland, or Parkland. (See Landscape Designations for DCR Parks & Forests: Selection Criteria and Management Guidelines (DCR 2012) for details.) Multiple Landscape Designations may apply to individual properties with diverse resources and levels of development. All of Lawton State Forest was designated Woodland. Identification of Land Stewardship Zones within Lawton was performed in the context of the Woodland Landscape Designation.

The following Land Stewardship Zoning is recommended to guide management and any future development. (See Figure 1. Land Stewardship Zoning Map, page 22, and the Land Stewardship Zoning layer on DCR's Stewardship Map: <https://dcrsgis-mass-eoeaa.hub.arcgis.com/>.)

Zone 1

Zone 1 areas have highly sensitive ecological and/or cultural resources that require additional management approaches and practices to protect and preserve these special features and their values (DCR 2012). The following areas of Lawton have been designated Zone 1.

- No areas within the forest have been designated Zone 1.

Zone 2

Zone 2 areas provide for a balance between resource stewardship and recreational opportunities that can be appropriately sustained. They include stable yet important cultural and natural resources. These areas provide a buffer for sensitive resources, recharge areas for surface and groundwaters, and large areas where existing public recreation activities can be managed at sustainable levels (DCR 2012). The following areas of Lawton have been designated Zone 2.

- The entirety of the Forest, excepting one Zone 3 site.

Zone 3

Zone 3 areas include altered landscapes in active use and areas suitable for future administrative, maintenance, and recreation areas (DCR 2012). The following areas of Lawton are currently developed, appropriate for potential future development, or intensively used for recreation. They have been designated Zone 3.

- An approximately 0.1-acre area off the west shoulder of Townsend Road, previously established as a log landing. This area may be appropriate for future improvement (consistent with Management Forestry uses) as a designated parking area with a DCR Cantilevered Identification Sign and Welcome Wayside.

Significant Feature Overlay

Significant Feature Overlays provide precise management guidance in order to maintain or preserve recognized resources features regardless of the zone in which they occur. The following Significant Feature Overlays were developed for Lawton.

- No areas of the Forest require a Significant Feature Overlay.

DCR STEWARDSHIP MAP TOOL

This RMP should be viewed in conjunction with DCR's Stewardship Map, a GIS-based tool that allows users to view a property's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. The Stewardship Map tool is dynamic, and information continues to be updated after adoption of an RMP. Guidance for using the tool, as well as Best Management Practices for resource stewardship, are located on the Stewardship Map site: <https://dcrsgis-mass-eoeaa.hub.arcgis.com/>.

Because authorized trails are located within State-Listed Species Habitat on this property, managers should consult an additional GIS-based tool, the NHESP 2022 Guidance Codes for DCR Trail Maintenance

Map. (<https://mass-eoeaa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=cb252e8df40d408c81fe8fcf690e14f6>)

This tool allows users to select specific trail segments and identify restrictions and regulatory review associated with performing 10 common trail maintenance activities on these segments. Because site-specific rare species information is confidential under Massachusetts law (M.G.L. c. 66, § 17D), access to this tool is restricted.

CONSISTENCY REVIEW

Resource Management Plans “shall ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management” (M.G.L. c. 21, § 2F). For planning purposes, an activity is considered consistent with resource protection if it has no significant, long-term, adverse impact on resources. To this end, a series of indicators were developed to evaluate the impacts of recreation and forest management on natural and cultural resources.

Many activities with the potential to negatively affect resources are already subject to agency and/or regulatory review (e.g., forest management activities, projects within Priority Habitat). For these activities, compliance with state regulations, regulatory authority guidance, DCR policies and processes, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) is considered an indicator of consistency between park use and resource protection. New indicators were generated for activities not subject to agency or regulatory review, and are based on available data, information readily identifiable via aerial imagery or site visits, assessments by DCR subject matter experts, or the property manager’s knowledge of park conditions and use. (See Table 18, page 23.)

Indicators are applied during the RMP planning process in order to ensure a standardized assessment of consistency across all properties in the DCR system. Inconsistencies identified via the application of indicators are used to inform the development of management recommendations.

The status of indicators (Yes, No, Unknown, and N/A) were accurate at the time this RMP was prepared and were used for planning purposes. However, they represent a snapshot in time and may not reflect future conditions. In addition, the status of indicators will change as recommendations get implemented.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Nineteen priority management recommendations were developed for this property. They are presented in Table 19, page 26. All recommendations are of equal importance.

Priority management recommendations derive from Threats, Opportunities, and Consistency Assessment information presented in this RMP. For a recommendation to be considered a priority and listed in the table, it must meet one or more of the criteria listed below. Maintenance and management needs not meeting one or more of these criteria are not included in the table but are identified in the Threats and Opportunities sections.

The following types of recommendations are considered priority:

- Natural resource stewardship and restoration activities consistent with park identity and intended to improve ecological function and connectivity.
- Cultural resource management activities consistent with park identity and intended to prevent the loss of integrity of significant cultural resources.
- Improvements consistent with park identity that are needed to support intended park activities.

- Actions required for regulatory compliance or compliance with legal agreements.
- Activities that prevent or ameliorate threats to the health and safety of park visitors and employees.
- Activities that address inconsistencies among recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management, as identified through use of the Consistency Assessment checklist.

Progress toward implementing priority recommendations is tracked through the use of DCR's Capital Asset Management Information System (CAMIS). The property manager should enter each recommendation listed in Table 19 (page 26) into CAMIS as a separate work order, noting "*RMP" in the description field. Non-traditional work orders (e.g., volunteer trail work, posting of Department of Public Health (DPH) Fish Consumption Advisory posters, certification of vernal pools) should be closed out by the property manager, once the recommendation has been implemented.

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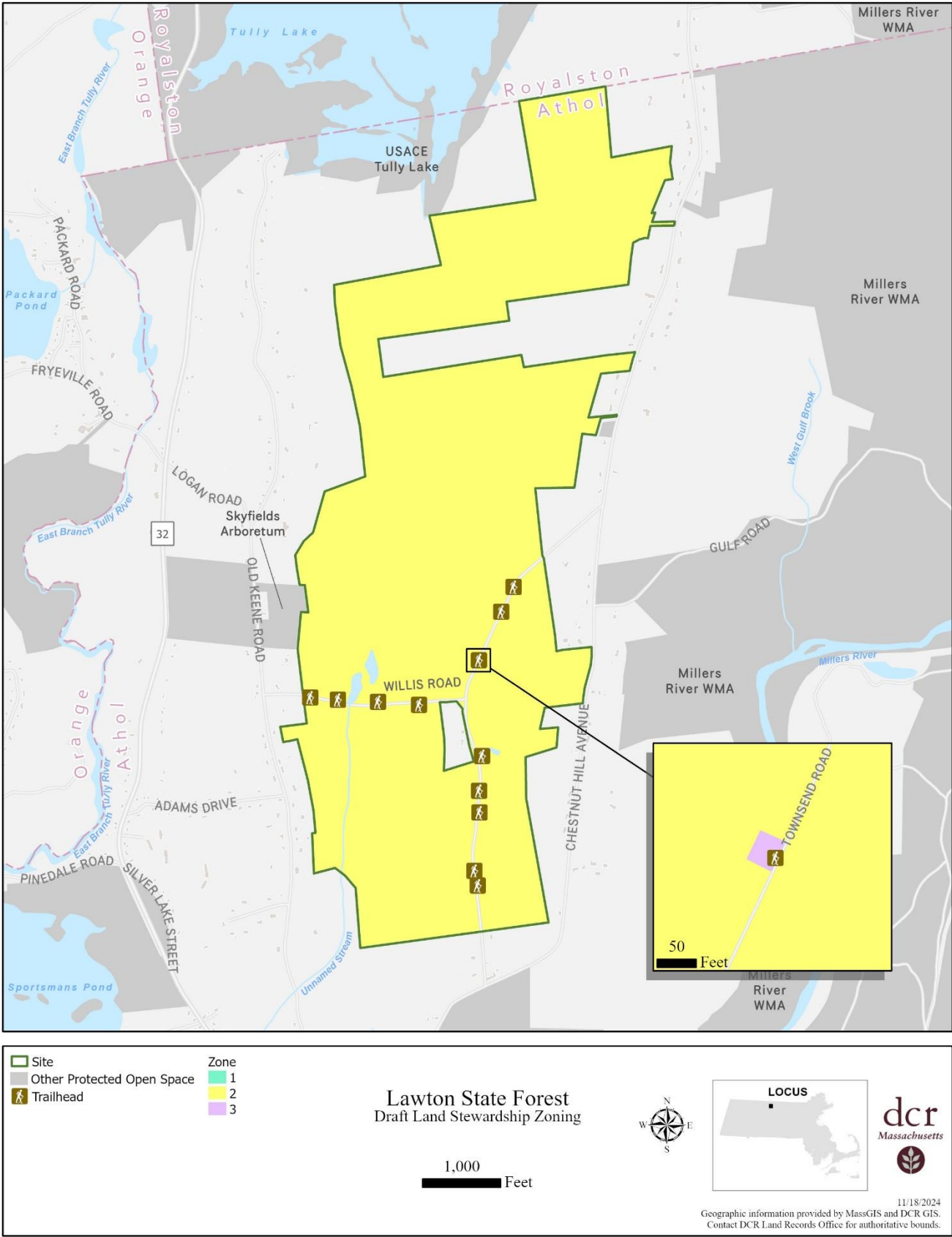


Figure 1. Land Stewardship Zoning Map.

Table 18. Consistency Assessment. This assessment represents a snapshot in time and may not reflect future conditions.

Category	Metric	Status
Landscape Designation	1. All development and uses of the park since 2012, or currently planned for the park, are consistent with its Landscape Designation(s).	Yes
Natural Resources	1. All projects (normal maintenance activities, special projects, volunteer projects) conducted within Priority Habitat were reviewed and approved through DCR's internal review process and by NHESP for potential impacts to rare species and their habitats.	N/A
Natural Resources	2. All projects conducted within areas subject to state and/or federal wetlands or waterways regulations were reviewed and approved through DCR's internal review process; reviewed and approved through the appropriate, local, state, and/or federal review process; and were carried out in accordance with the terms of a valid permit.	Y
Natural Resources	3. Sensitive resource areas, such as steep slopes, riverbanks, streambanks, pond and lakeshores, wetlands, and dunes are free of desire paths and other user-created trails.	No
Natural Resources	4. Aquatic areas adjacent to beaches, boat ramps and launches, roads, and hiking trails are free of eroded sediments.	No
Natural Resources	5. The extent of exposed soil in campground and/or picnic sites is stable or decreasing.	N/A
Natural Resources	6. The extent of native vegetation in campground and/or picnic sites is stable or increasing. (As assessed by property manager.)	N/A
Natural Resources	7. Area of trail impacts in Reserves is less than 50% of total area. (See Naughton (2021) for information on primary area of trail impacts.)	N/A
Natural Resources	8. Congregations of breeding, migratory, or wintering wildlife are protected from disturbance by temporary (e.g., seasonal) restrictions on recreational access.	N/A
Natural Resources	9. Geocaches, letterboxes, orienteering control locations, and other discovery destinations are located outside sensitive natural resource areas and their locations have been reviewed and approved by park personnel. (As assessed by property manager.)	No
Natural Resources	10. Zone I wellhead protection areas are free of vehicle parking, chemical storage, or concentrated recreation.	N/A

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Category	Metric	Status
Natural Resources	11. All boat ramps and launches have cleaning stations and/or educational signs and materials on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive organisms. (As assessed by property manager.)	N/A
Natural Resources	12. For each barrier beach there is a current, approved Barrier Beach Management Plan and all beach-related activities are conducted in accordance with this plan.	N/A
Cultural Resources	1. All maintenance activities and projects with the potential to cause sub-surface disturbance are being reviewed by the DCR archaeologist for potential impacts to archaeological resources.	No
Cultural Resources	2. All maintenance activities and projects affecting historic properties (buildings, structures, and landscapes over 50-years-old) are being reviewed by the Office of Cultural Resources to avoid adverse impacts.	Yes
Cultural Resources	3. Historic buildings, structures, and landscapes are being used, maintained, and repaired in a manner that preserves their cultural integrity and conveys their historic significance to park visitors.	Yes
Cultural Resources	4. Recreational activities such as hiking, biking, and boating are not eroding cultural properties such as archaeological sites or historic landscapes through creation of desire lines, rutting in the landscape, damage to historic built features, or excessive scouring (erosion) of coastal and shoreline areas.	Unknown
Cultural Resources	5. Geocaches, letterboxes, and other discovery destinations are located away from sensitive cultural resources, and their locations have been reviewed and approved by park personnel.	No
Cultural Resources	6. Historic buildings, structures, landscapes, archaeological sites, and concentrations of historic resources are located outside of areas predicted to be subject to flooding, storm surge, or sea-level rise.	Yes
Recreation	1. Types of recreation, levels of recreational use, and types and extent of recreation infrastructure are consistent with the park's identity statement.	Yes

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Category	Metric	Status
Recreation	2. Trail density is consistent with the park's Landscape Designation(s). (See Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual (DCR 2019) for density thresholds.)	Yes
Recreation	3. All authorized trail construction was performed in accordance with an approved Trail Proposal Form.	No
Recreation	4. Over 90% of the park's official trails network is classified as being in Fair or better condition.	Yes
Recreation	5. Recurring use by OHVs is restricted to authorized trails. (As assessed by property manager.)	No
Recreation	6. There is a high level of compliance with dog leash regulations and policies. (As assessed by property manager.)	Yes
Recreation	7. Athletic fields are free of recreation-caused impacts (e.g., bare spots) to turf. (As assessed by property manager.)	N/A
Recreation	8. Water-based recreation is consistent with "Uses Attained" designation as identified by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in its most current integrated list of waters (e.g., MassDEP 2023); DPH fish consumption advisories; and/or water quality testing at waterfront areas.	N/A
Recreation	9. Recreation facilities are located outside of areas subject to flooding, storm surge, or sea-level rise.	Yes
Sustainable Forest Management	1. Forestry activities are consistent with Landscape Designation and associated forestry guidelines.	Yes
Sustainable Forest Management	2. Forestry activities are consistent with current Forest Resource Management Plan.	N/A
Sustainable Forest Management	3. Tree cutting is performed in accordance with an approved cutting plan, if required under the Massachusetts Forest Cutting Practices Act (M.G.L. c. 132, § 40–46).	Yes

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Table 19. Priority Recommendations for Lawton State Forest. All recommendations are of equal importance. When multiple agency parties are responsible for implementing a recommendation, the lead party, or parties, are identified parenthetically in the Implementation column. Property managers should enter these recommendations as work orders in CAMIS to ensure their tracking and implementation.

Category	Recommendation	Implementation
Natural Resources	Apply Landscape Designations to those portions of the Forest currently lacking such designations.	Management Forestry (Lead), GIS Program
Natural Resources	As appropriate, investigate and acquire land in fee or easements that would enhance recreational trail connectivity, or would protect or enhance other defining conservation resources and values.	Land Protection Program, Office of the General Counsel
Natural Resources	Complete forest management project (in development at the time this RMP was written) in southwest corner of the Forest to enhance forest resiliency and protect Coldwater Fisheries Resource in this location.	Management Forestry
Natural Resources	Survey, document, and submit documentation to certify potential vernal pools, in accordance with DCR (n.d.a) and MassWildlife (2009), as warranted.	Office of Natural Resources (Lead), Volunteers
Natural Resources	<p>In partnership with the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), conduct a survey to identify the following types of natural resources on the recently acquired 186-acre northern parcel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act; • Priority Natural Communities; and • Potential vernal pools. <p>As appropriate, document these resources in consultation with the NHESP. Update Resource Management Plan Land Stewardship Zoning and/or Significant Feature Overlays, if needed based on survey findings.</p>	Office of Cultural Resources (RMP Program), Office of Natural Resources (Lead), Partner
Cultural Resources	Clear vegetation from cellar holes in accordance with DCR Best Management Practices (DCR n.d.b).	Management Forestry; Office of Cultural Resources, Park Operations (Lead)

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Category	Recommendation	Implementation
Cultural Resources	Conduct a historical landscape survey of the former Hill-Lawton Farmstead and archaeological reconnaissance survey (950 CMR 70) of the entire Forest. Evaluate historical above-ground and archaeological resources to ascertain whether the resource(s) are a potentially significant historic property. Complete appropriate Massachusetts Historical Commission architectural Inventory and archaeological site forms for identified historical and archaeological resources.	Consultant, Office of Cultural Resources (Lead)
Cultural Resources	Work with Indigenous partners to inventory, document, conserve, and interpret Indigenous resources and Indigenous history within the Forest.	Management Forestry, Office of Cultural Resources (Lead), Partner
Recreation	Replace Main Identification Sign with new sign conforming to DCR graphic standards.	Park Operations, Sign Shop (Lead)
Recreation	Reroute trail or acquire a trail easement where the existing trail leading to the northerly parcel crosses private property.	Trails and Greenways Section (Lead), Land Protection Program
Recreation	Establish a DCR web page for the Forest.	Interpretive Services, Regional Staff (Lead), State Parks Operations, Web Content Creator
Recreation	Create a Forest trail map.	GIS Program, Interpretive Services, Trails and Greenways Section (Lead)
Recreation	Clear tree falls and brush from official trails and add standard DCR signage and confidence blazes.	Park Operations
Recreation	Implement measures to curb unauthorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, such as adding gates (including at new parcel), supplementing existing gates, and erecting signage prohibiting OHV use.	Forest Fire Control, Management Forestry, Park Operations

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Category	Recommendation	Implementation
Recreation	<p>Resolve trail-related threats and opportunities identified in this RMP, in accordance with Trails Guidelines and Best Practices (DCR 2019, or update), through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain authorized trails, as identified in the DCR Trail Data Layer provided to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program in 2021, and in accordance with the Recreational Trail Maintenance and Biodiversity Conservation 2021 update. • Evaluate trail segments for discontinuation or active closure, including those that are: unauthorized, unsafe, connecting to privately-owned property, located in environmentally or culturally sensitive areas, or otherwise inconsistent with DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices. Provide an updated trail data layer to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. • Establish new trails, as warranted, following regulatory review. Provide an updated trail data layer to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. 	Management Forestry, Office of Natural Resources), Park Operations (Co-Lead), Partners, Trails and Greenways Section (Co-Lead)
Recreation	In partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and other interested parties (as appropriate) investigate creation of a connecting trail between the Forest and the Tully Lake property, including the Tully Trail.	Partner(s), Trails and Greenways Section (Lead)
Recreation	Work with the geocaching community to ensure that caches located in sensitive natural and cultural resources are relocated out of those areas and that any new geocaches are placed outside of sensitive areas and with the approval of the property manager.	Office of Cultural Resources, Office of Natural Resources, Park Operations (Lead)
Recreation	Following appropriate review and permitting, create main gateway consisting of a formal parking area with a DCR Cantilevered Identification Sign and Welcome Wayside. Explore feasibility of using existing log landing on west side of Townsend Road for this amenity.	Facilities Engineering (Co-Lead), Interpretive Services (Co-Lead), Management Forestry (Co-Lead), Park Operations

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Category	Recommendation	Implementation
Recreation	Continue increased presence of Environmental Police Officers, DCR Rangers, and/or Forest operations staff, as appropriate and available, in areas with high levels of unauthorized activity (e.g. camping, off-highway vehicle use, trail clearing, vegetation clearing).	Bureau of Ranger Services (Co-Lead), Regional Staff (Co-Lead), Park Operations

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