



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



Resource Management Plans: Blackstone Complex

DCR Stewardship Council; January 16, 2025



View from the Observation Tower



Today's Presentation

- ▶ Complex-level
 - ▶ Properties
 - ▶ Comments
- ▶ Property-level
 - ▶ Resources
 - ▶ Findings
 - ▶ Comments
- ▶ Comments/Questions



Blackstone River

100





Overview of Public Comment

	Public Meeting	Written Comments
Number of commenters	15	30
Total number of comments	16	30
Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park	6	2
Douglas State Forest	2	2
Purgatory Chasm State Reservation	0	0
Southern New England Trunkline Trail	4	21
Sutton State Forest	0	0
Upton State Forest	2	4
General	2	1



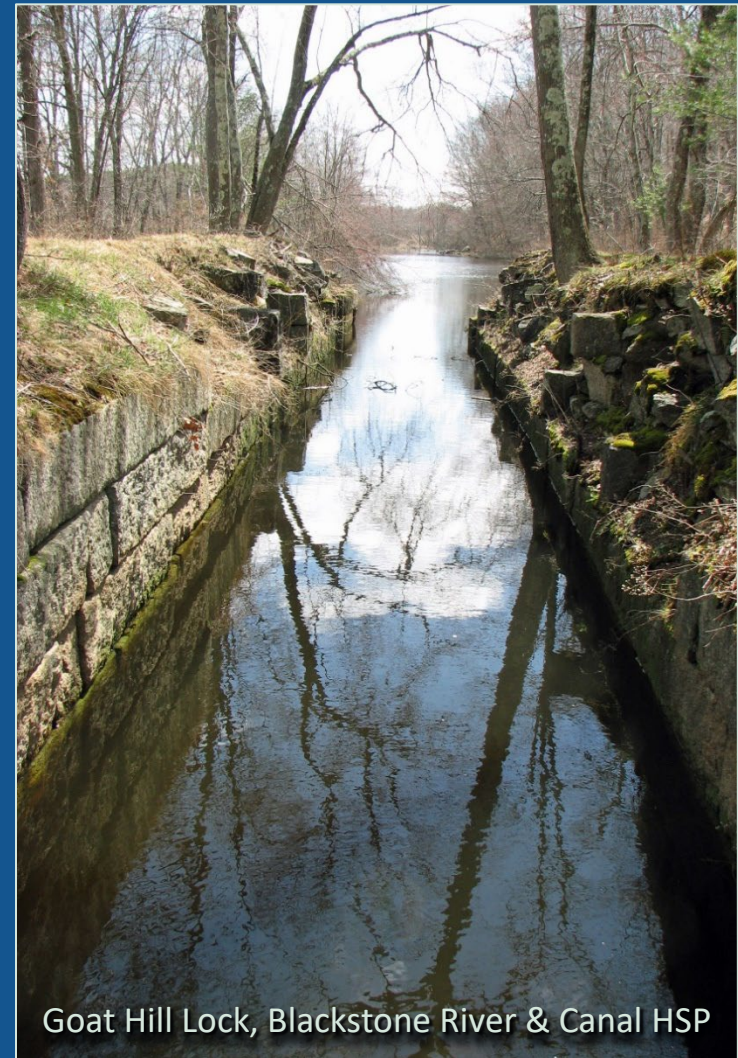
Responses to Public Comment



- ▶ All comments are considered and, as appropriate, incorporated into the RMP.
- ▶ Consult with field operations personnel, subject matter experts, and reference materials to better understand/respond to comment.
- ▶ Comments appropriate for an RMP may result in:
 - ▶ Revision of RMP text
 - ▶ Revisions to Land Stewardship Zoning map
 - ▶ New recommendation(s)
- ▶ Comments outside the scope of an RMP, but relevant to the property, are shared with DCR staff (e.g., location of sewer line beneath Blackstone HSP and specific locations of trail or drainage issues along the SNETT).

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	1,166.7
Landscape Designation	Parkland (1,053.6 acres) No Designation (113.1 acres)
Rare Species	3 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	45 total 2 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking on leash Fishing Heritage tourism Hiking/Walking Hunting Interpretive programming Picnicking Running, races Scenic vista viewing Wildlife viewing



Goat Hill Lock, Blackstone River & Canal HSP

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park: Key Findings



- ▶ Increase the connection between water quality, recreation, and park management.
- ▶ Establish formal agreement to allow DCR and public access to the Millville Lock tract.
- ▶ Formalize a reciprocal parking agreement with Tri-River Family Health Center.
- ▶ Relocate portable recreation infrastructure out of 1.0%-chance flood zones.
- ▶ Multiple trail issues (e.g., excessive trail density, inaccurate maps).
- ▶ Opportunities to enhance accessibility by implementing recommendations in 2021 accessibility assessment.

Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Worcester Visitor Center: Key Findings

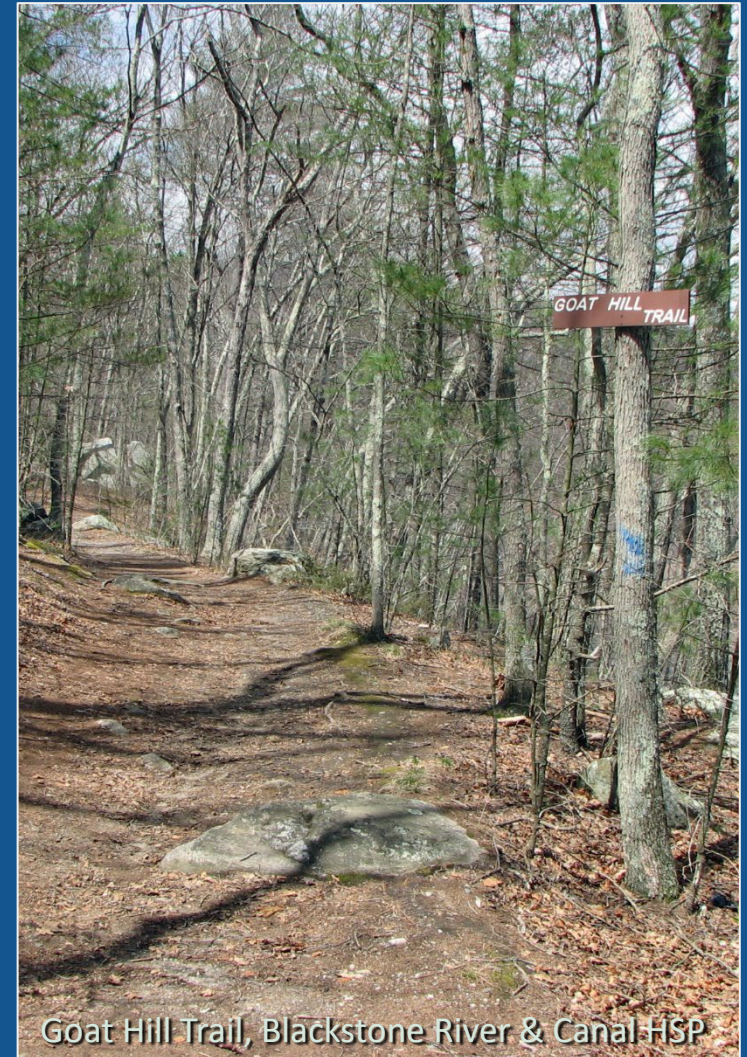


Worcester Visitor Center

- ▶ Canal prism and associated towpath provide a tangible connection to the Blackstone Canal within the City of Worcester.
- ▶ Visitor Center picnic area, adjacent parking, and operations garage within 1.0%-chance flood zone, and visitor center building, parking, and multi-use path within 0.2%-chance flood zone.
- ▶ Opportunity to use WVC to promote Environmental Justice.
- ▶ Other Issues:
 - ▶ Scheduling use of Visitor Center; and
 - ▶ Homeless encampments; resolved on DCR property via DCR, contractor, and partner(s).

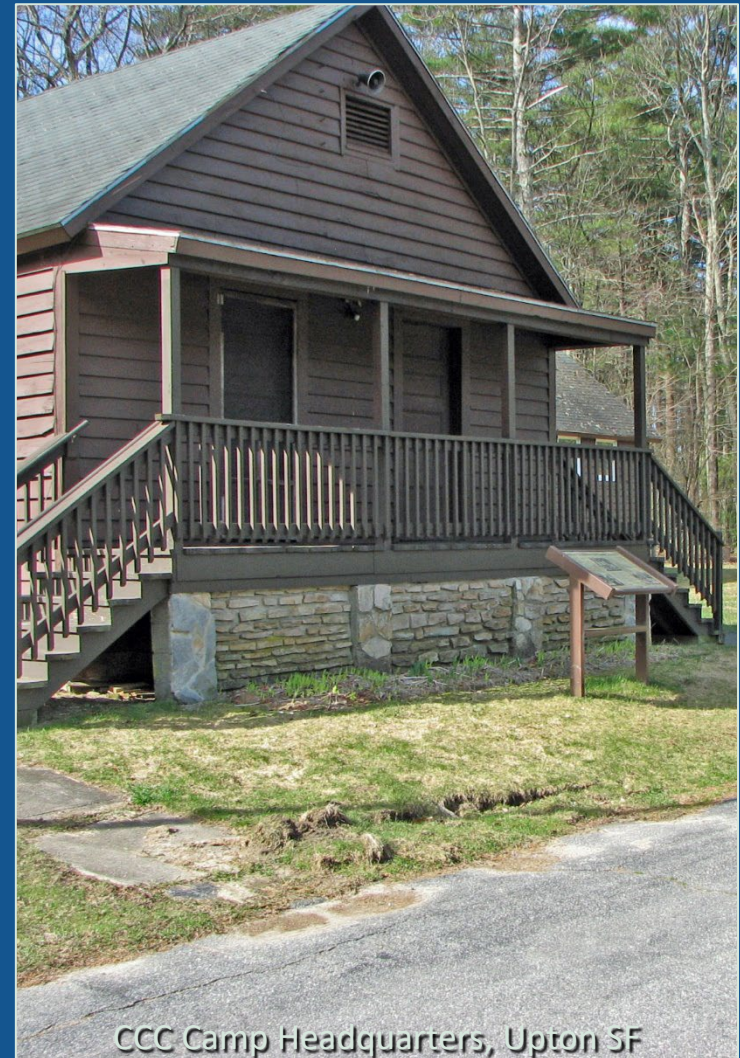
Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park: Comments

- ▶ Blackstone River water quality
- ▶ Stormwater management at parking area
- ▶ Addressing unauthorized trails at Goat Hill
- ▶ Possibility of single-purpose trails at Goat Hill
- ▶ Eroded trails
- ▶ Control of invasive species
- ▶ Partnering with municipalities to implement RMP
- ▶ Riverbank erosion & stabilization
- ▶ Dam removal (WVC)
- ▶ Opportunities and Threats revised, and one Recommendation revised



Upton State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	3,063.5
Landscape Designation	Parkland (28.4 acres) Woodland (2,510.2 acres) No Designation (473.9 acres)
Rare Species	5 State; 0 Federal*
Cultural Resources	59 total 1 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Canoeing/Kayaking Dog walking on leash Fishing Hiking/Walking Horseback riding Hunting Picnicking Running, races Snowmobiling Wildlife viewing



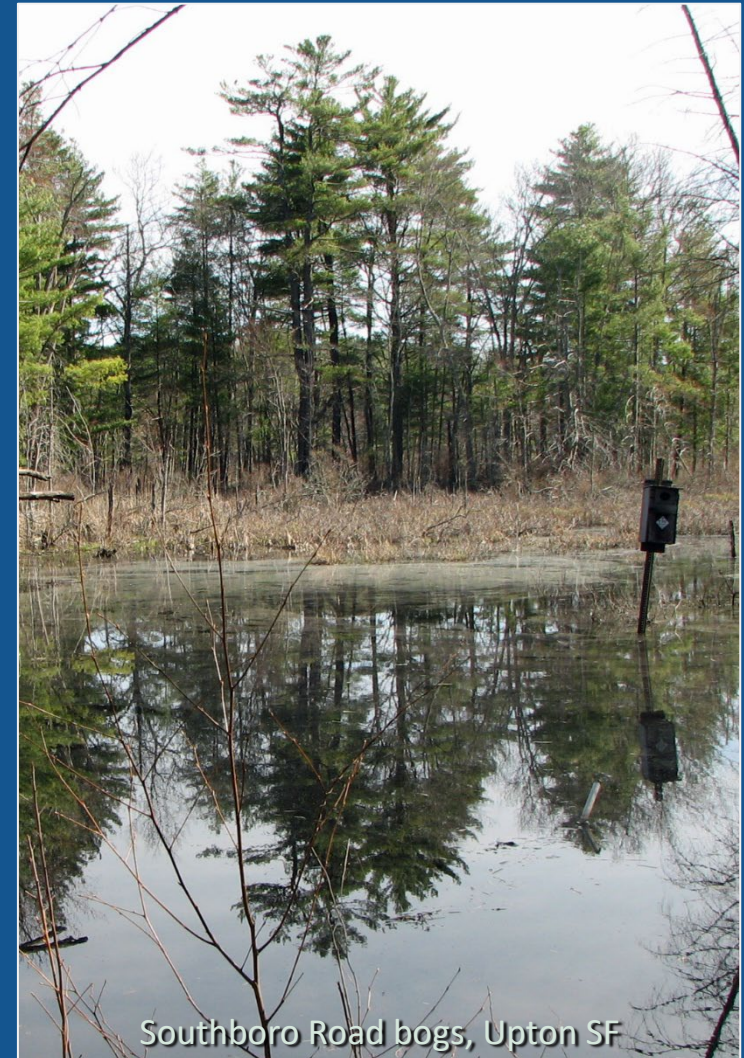
Upton State Forest: Key Findings



- ▶ Monitor status of state-Endangered animal currently proposed for listing as Endangered under ESA.
- ▶ Develop, permit, and Implement Vegetation Management Plan for Southboro Road bogs.
- ▶ ...Identify and map cultural resources, including cultural landscape features, associated with the Southboro Road bogs.
- ▶ Finalize draft Long-Range Interpretive Plan.
- ▶ Further implement recommendations contained in 2013 Cultural Resources Management Plan.
- ▶ Work with Indigenous partners to inventory, document, conserve, and interpret Indigenous peoples' resources and history.
- ▶ Pursue formal public access to landlocked portions of Forest.

Upton State Forest: Comments

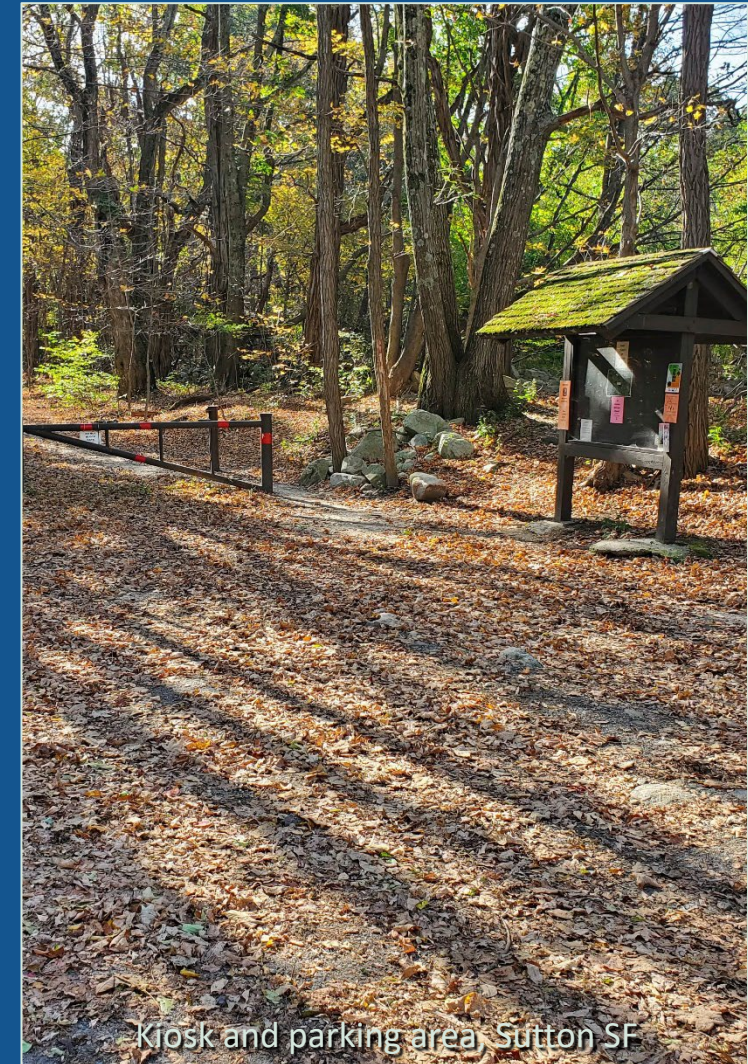
- ▶ Unauthorized trails, trail density, trail closures
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Southboro Road bogs
- ▶ Land acquisition
- ▶ Paving interior park road (Pratt Hill Rd.)
- ▶ Interpreting CCC camp – centennial celebration activities
- ▶ Numerous additional items
- ▶ Dashboard revised; two Threats added and two revised; two Opportunities revised; Land Stewardship Zoning map revised; and one Recommendation added.



Southboro Road bogs, Upton SF

Sutton State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	1,532.3
Landscape Designation	Parkland (197.7 acres) Woodland (1,066.7 acres) No Designation (268.1 acres)
Rare Species	1 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	13 total 1 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Dog walking on leash Hiking/walking Hunting Nature study



Kiosk and parking area, Sutton SF

Sutton State Forest: Key Findings

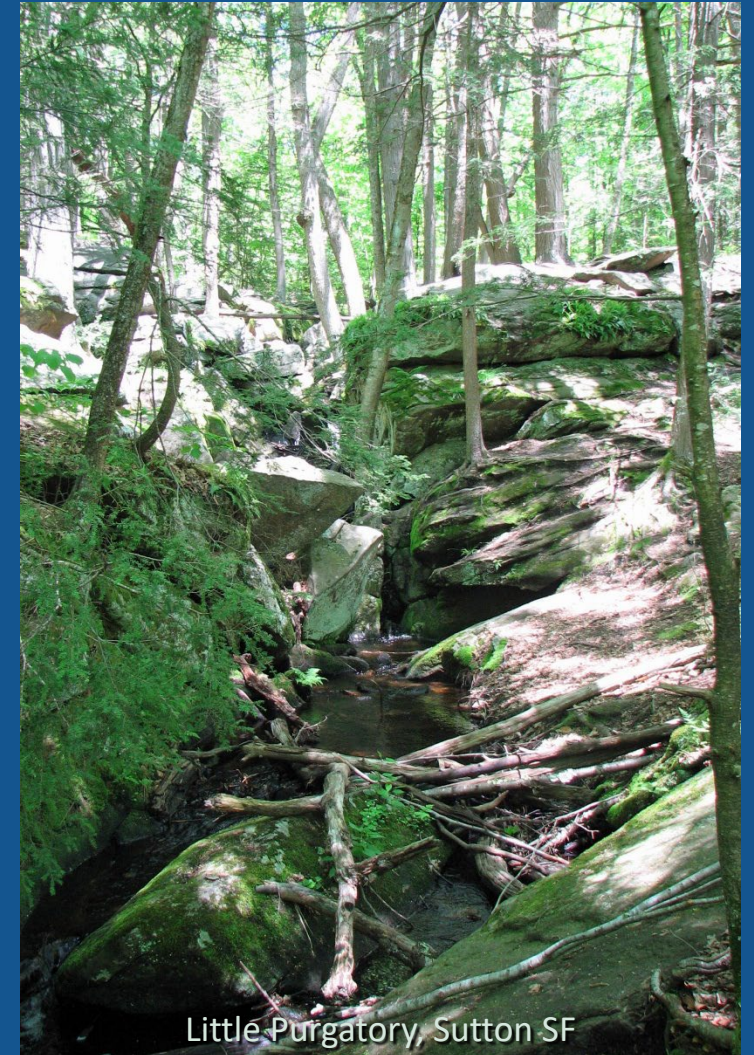


Wetland and stone wall, Sutton SF

- ▶ Lack of information about Forest.
- ▶ Insufficient parking.
- ▶ Extensive unauthorized trails network in Forest and on adjacent property.
- ▶ License Agreement with Whitinsville Water Company and associated obligations.
- ▶ 34-acre Waters Airport – opportunity for DCR to enhance conservation and showcase efforts.

Sutton State Forest: Comments

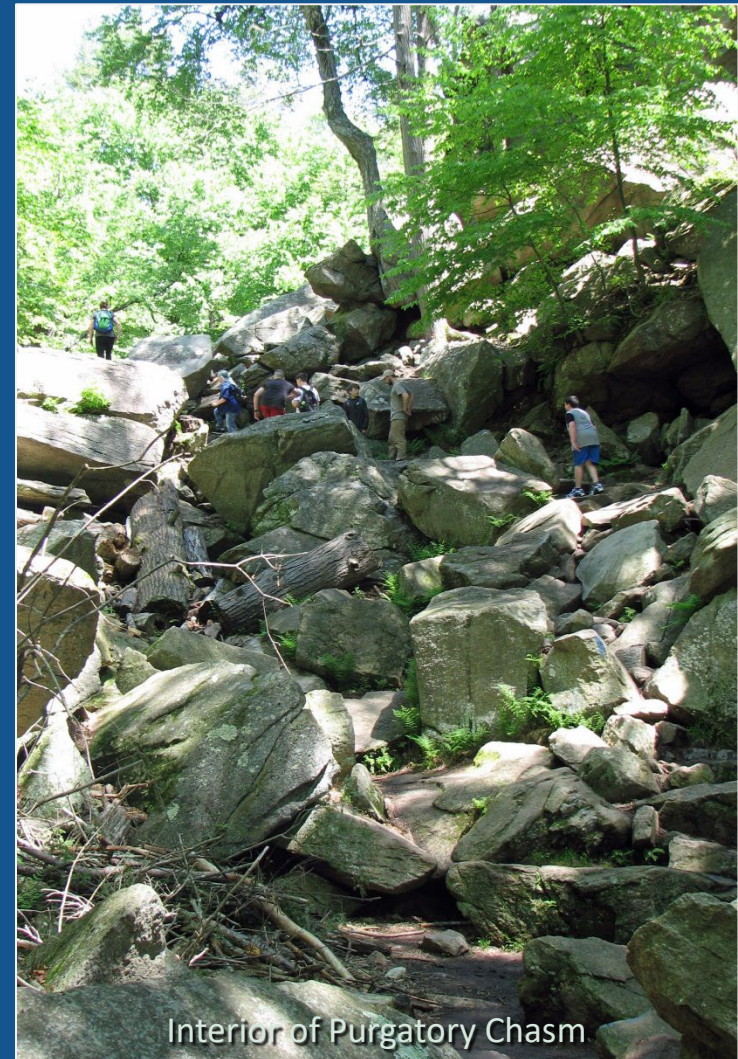
- ▶ No comments received
- ▶ One Recommendation revised



Little Purgatory, Sutton SF

Purgatory Chasm State Reservation: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	238.9
Landscape Designation	Parkland (93.5 acres) Woodland (56.6 acres) No Designation (88.8 acres)
Rare Species	1 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	17 total 0 on National Register
Recreation:	Dog walking, on leash Field games Hiking/walking Nature study/photography Interpretive programming Picnicking Playground use Rock climbing (by permit) Scenic vista viewing



Purgatory Chasm State Reservation: Key Findings

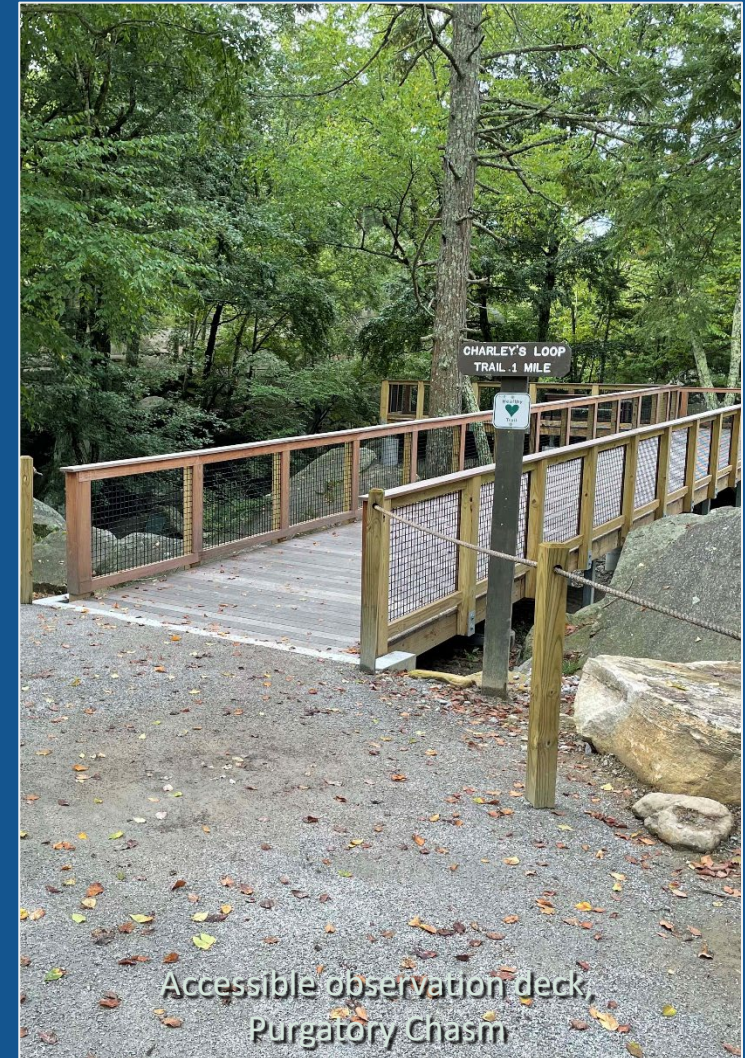


Visitor Center, Purgatory Chasm SR

- ▶ Opportunity to serve as gateway to both the Reservation and Sutton State Forest (VC, trail connections, etc.).
- ▶ Popular chasm rim trail is not sustainable.
- ▶ Approximately 1,500-feet of main loop trail (Charley's Loop) is located on private property.
- ▶ Wellhead Protection Area Zone I issues on south side (i.e., chasm side) of Purgatory Road.
- ▶ Opportunity to enhance accessibility by further implementing recommendations in 2018 accessibility assessment, and creation of web-based video tour of inside of chasm.

Purgatory Chasm State Reservation: Comments

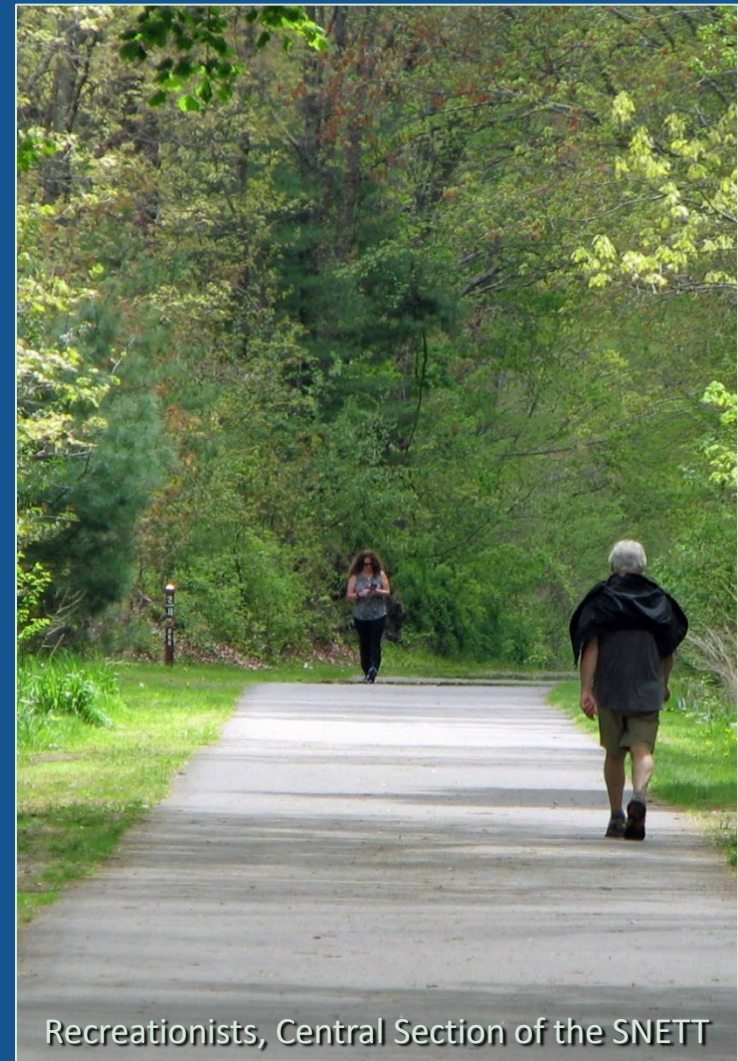
- ▶ No comments received
- ▶ No revisions



Accessible observation deck,
Purgatory Chasm

Southern New England Trunkline Trail: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	366.5
Landscape Designation	Parkland (40.8 acres) Reserve (64.1 acres) No Designation (256.1 acres)
Rare Species	4 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	27 total 4 on National Register
Recreation	Bicycling, mountain Bicycling, road Dog walking, on leash Hiking/walking Horseback riding Playground use Running/jogging Running, races Scenic vista viewing Skiing, cross-country Wildlife viewing



Recreationists, Central Section of the SNETT

Southern New England Trunkline Trail: Key Findings

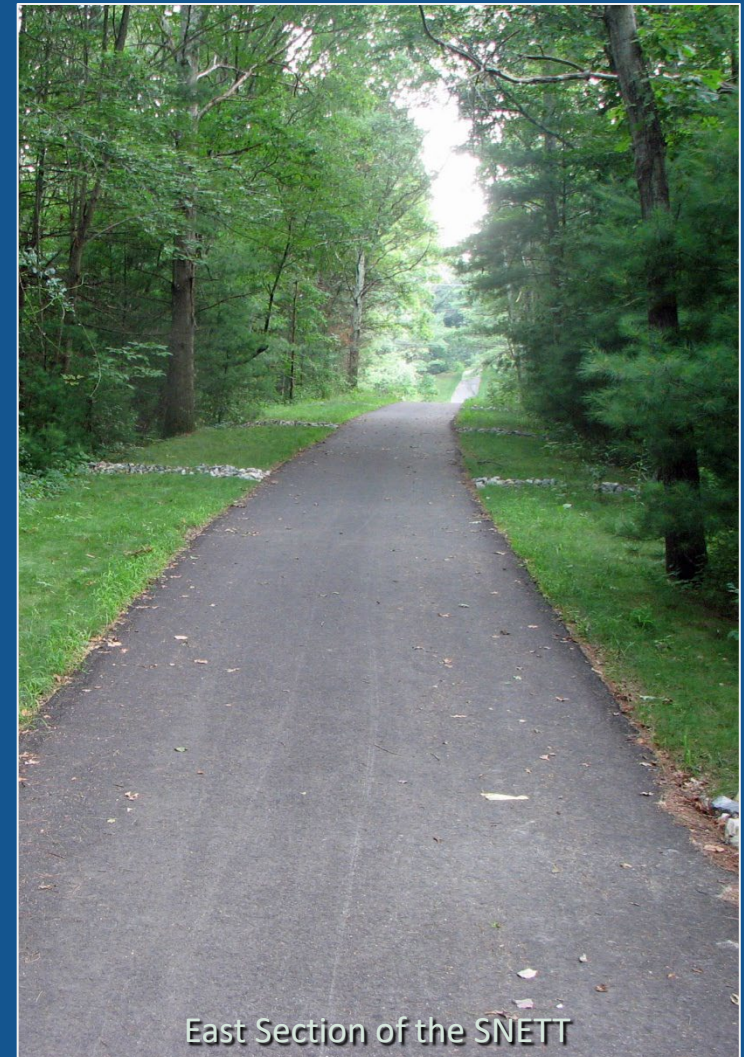


West Section of the SNETT

- ▶ 3 Sections (West, Central, East); each with distinct character (e.g., trail surface, identity, user group).
- ▶ Need for common identity and branding along entire length.
- ▶ Need to clarify management and public communication of management.
- ▶ Historic railroad resources are excellent candidates for preservation and interpretation.
- ▶ Improvements to West Section can enhance recreation and stream connectivity.

Southern New England Trunkline Trail: Comments

- ▶ Expansion eastward to downtown Franklin
- ▶ Connections among sections
- ▶ Erosion/drainage along trail & needed repair work
- ▶ ATV incursions
- ▶ Need for signs and regulations
- ▶ Desire for additional amenities (benches, trash barrels, dog waste bags, etc.)
- ▶ West Section trail surface
- ▶ Revise scope/content of RMP to provide detailed info on maintenance (e.g. vegetation management requirements) and upgrade of SNETT (budgets)
- ▶ Eight Opportunities added; four Recommendations added, one revised, and two deleted.



East Section of the SNETT

Douglas State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	5,925.7
Landscape Designation	Parkland (100.7 acres) Reserve (5,385.4 acres) No Designation (439.9 acres)
Rare Species	15 State; 0 Federal
Cultural Resources	19 total 0 on National Register
Recreation	Biking, mountain Boating, motorized Camping, backcountry Dog walking on leash Endurance events Fishing Hiking/walking Horseback riding Hunting Picnicking Running, races Swimming/Sunbathing



Wallum Lake Day Use Area, Douglas SF

Douglas State Forest: Key Findings



Mid-State Trail camping shelter, Douglas SF

- ▶ Excellent opportunity for landscape-scale management of natural and cultural resources (MA and RI).
- ▶ Regional hub for long-distance trails (i.e., Air Line State Park Trail, Mid-State Trail, SNETT, North-South Trail).
- ▶ Wallum Lake Terrace Beach Association operates private recreation area in Forest without legal agreement or allowing public access.
- ▶ Only known Massachusetts population of a State Endangered plant is in Wallum Lake.
- ▶ Non-conforming pit privy at backcountry campsite along Mid-State Trail.
- ▶ Wellhead Protection Area Zone I issues at Wallum Lake Day Use Area.

Douglas State Forest: Comments

- ▶ Use of CCC cottage at Wallum Lake
- ▶ Trail density, unauthorized trails, & trail closures (especially regarding equestrians)
- ▶ Expansion of Forest
- ▶ Parking (tow-vehicles and trailers)
- ▶ Water quality monitoring at Wallum Lake
- ▶ One Threat revised, one Opportunity added, one Recommendation added



Marsh, Douglas SF

Comments & Questions

