dcr MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Resource Management Plans for DCR's Central Highlands District

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor
Charles D. Baker

Lieutenant Governor
Karyn E. Polito

Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary
Bethany A. Card

Department of Conservation and Recreation Acting Commissioner
Stephanie C. Cooper

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DCR MISSION

To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

Meeting Logistics

- You will have the opportunity to submit comments through June 28, at:
  - DCR Public Comments https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments
- Two ways to offer comments during the meeting
  - Use chat feature
  - Raise your hand using the Zoom function, and you will be given permissions to unmute and speak.
- *Please note that this public meeting will be recorded; the recording will be a public record.*

Tonight’s Meeting

- Resource Management Plans (RMPs)
- Central Highlands District Properties
- Your input on Central Highlands parks

Resource Management Plans (RMPs)
(*M.G.L. Chapter 21; Section 2F)*

The Commissioner of Conservation and Recreation shall submit management plans to the Stewardship Council with respect to all reservations, parks, and forests under the management of the department.

Required Elements

Said management plans shall:[1]

- Include guidelines for the operation and land stewardship of the aforementioned reservations, parks, and forests;
- Provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources; and
- Ensure consistency between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management.

Contents include unique resources, potential uses, Land Stewardship Zoning analysis, and action recommendations.[2]

1. M.G.L. Chapter 21; Section 2F
2. 304 CMR 7.00

Resource Management Plans

dcr
Massachusetts

Resource Management Plan
Douglas State Forest

Adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council Month, 2022

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

dcr
Massachusetts

Douglas State Forest

Central Region | Central Valley District | Blackstone Complex

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Park Overview

Date Established:	1934
Location:	Douglas, Oxford, Webster
Landscape Designation (acres)	
Parkland:	103.9
Reserve:	5,839.4
Woodland:	0.0
Park Size (acres)	5,943.3
Boundary Length (miles):	45.8
Annual Attendance (2020):	131,670
Regulatory Designations (acres):	
Priority Habitat (MESA)	4,497.1
Outstanding Resource Waters – Wallum Lake	0.1
Environmental Justice (acres):	29.6

Long-Term Agreements

Wallum Lake Terrace Beach Assoc.	2003

Concessions

Richie's Ice Cream and Food Truck	2020

Partners & Friends

Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA)
https://bstra.org/
New England Mountain Bike Association
https://www.nemba.org/

Features of Interest

- Wallum Lake Recreation (Day-Use) Area
- Atlantic white cedar swamp and boardwalk trail
- Trails network
- Access to Southern New England Trunkline Trail

Activities

- Bicycling, mountain
- Boating, motorized
- Boating, non-motorized
- Camping, backcountry (along Mid-State Trail)
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Dog walking, on leash
- Endurance events
- Fishing, fin fish
- Geocaching/letterboxing
- Hiking/walking
- Horseback riding
- Horseshoe pitching
- Hunting
- Kite flying
- Nature study/photography
- Picnicking
- Running/jogging
- Running, races (road or trail)
- Skiing, cross-country
- Snowshoeing
- Snowmobiling
- Swimming/Sunbathing
- Wildlife viewing

Contact Info: (508) 476-7872 • 107 Wallum Lake Road, Douglas, MA 01516
https://www.mass.gov/locations/douglas-state-forest

Introduction

Douglas State Forest (Douglas or the Forest) is located in the Towns of Douglas, Oxford, and Webster at the intersection of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. It is situated approximately 20 miles south of the City of Worcester, 25 miles north of Providence, Rhode Island, and 45 miles northeast of Hartford, Connecticut. The Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) begins at, and passes through, the Forest.

Douglas State Forest was established in 1934 with the acquisition of approximately 1,245 acres in the Town of Douglas for the purpose of providing "additional acreage for the economic employment of the Civilian Conservation Corps" (DOC 1934). Soon after, the CCC constructed camps, began forest management, and developed recreation facilities, setting the stage for today's park. The CCC was only the latest in a long line of stewards. The area that is now Douglas State Forest is in heart of Nipmuc country and was occupied by the Tribe for millennia.

Douglas State Forest offers two very different types of visitor experiences. Its recreation area draws people to the clean, clear waters of Wallum Lake to swim, fish, and boat, and to picnic along its shore. Although only a tiny portion of the forest, the recreation area is its most popular attraction. During the beach season, it attracts hundreds of visitors daily. Away from the lake, a different visitor experience awaits. Trails crisscross thousands of acres of rock-strewn uplands, allowing visitors to get away from crowds, explore the forest, and reconnect with nature. These trails are part of a broad, regional network that connects to trail systems in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. History lives throughout the forest; visitors may observe evidence of the past at the recreation area and along the hiking trails.

Traditionally, the portion of the SNETT that passes through the Forest has been mapped as being a part of Douglas State Forest. This is largely attributable to that portion of the SNETT being the first parcel acquired, and initially viewed as an expansion of Douglas. Beginning with this RMP, this portion of the SNETT has been removed from Douglas State Forest and is solely considered part of the SNETT. This change is reflected in RMPs for both Douglas State Forest and the SNETT.

Forest Identity and Significance

Douglas State Forest is best known for two features: Wallum Lake Recreation Area, and the Forest's vast trails network. It is less well known for its role as a Reserve. The Wallum Lake Recreation Area is the forest's signature feature and is the area most heavily used by visitors. Wallum Lake provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy water-based recreation activities. Over 60-miles of official trails connect visitors with the cultural and natural resources within the Forest itself, as well as to a broader trail network that extends throughout southern New England. All future activities and improvements should be consistent with Douglas' identity as a regionally important day-use area, as a destination for trail users, as a regional hub for long-distance trails, and its designation as a Reserve.

Douglas State Forest is significant for the following reasons:

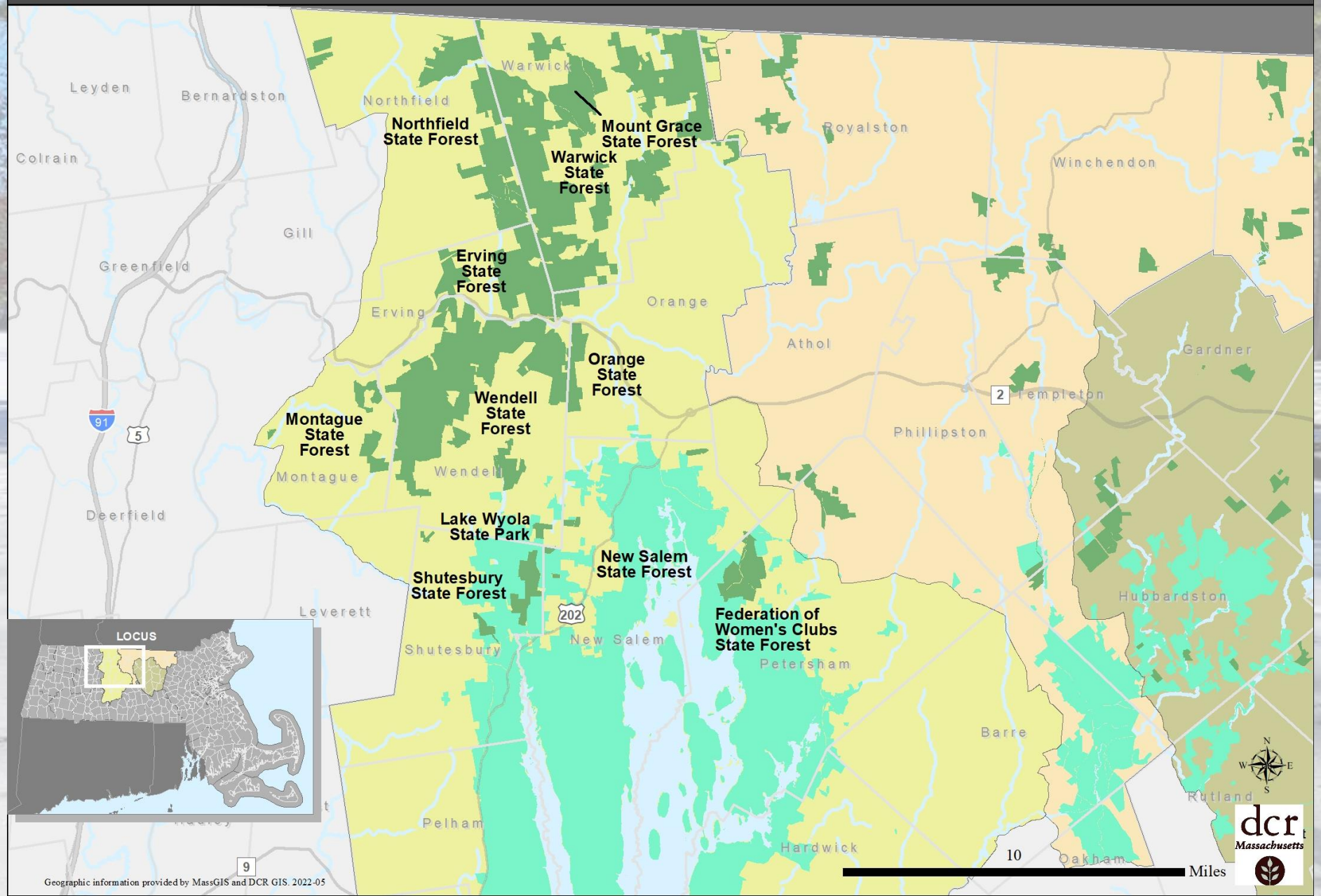
- Wallum Lake Recreation Area provides swimming boating, and fishing opportunities to many visitors in southern New England. To many, this day-use area is the public face of the Forest.
- Douglas is contiguous with Buck Hill Wildlife Management Area to the south (Rhode Island) and Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area to the north, creating a block of over 9,100 acres of contiguous protected open space.
- The Forest's large size and interior trails network provide abundant opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.
- Douglas is located at the crossroads of four southern New England long-distance trails. This concentration of long-distance trails coming together in one location is unique in the DCR system.
- The Forest contains surprisingly intact examples of both pre- and post-Contact stone features.

RMP - Main Body

- Introduction
- Park Identity and Significance (Unique resources)
- Defining Resources and Values (Unique resources)
- Interpretive Theme
- Visitor Experience
- Threats and Opportunities - Natural Resources, Cultural Resources, Recreation (Protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources, unique resources, potential uses)
- Climate Exposure
- Applied Land Stewardship Zoning (Land Stewardship Zoning Analysis)
- Consistency Review (Ensure consistency)
- Management Recommendations (Action Recommendations)

Erving Complex

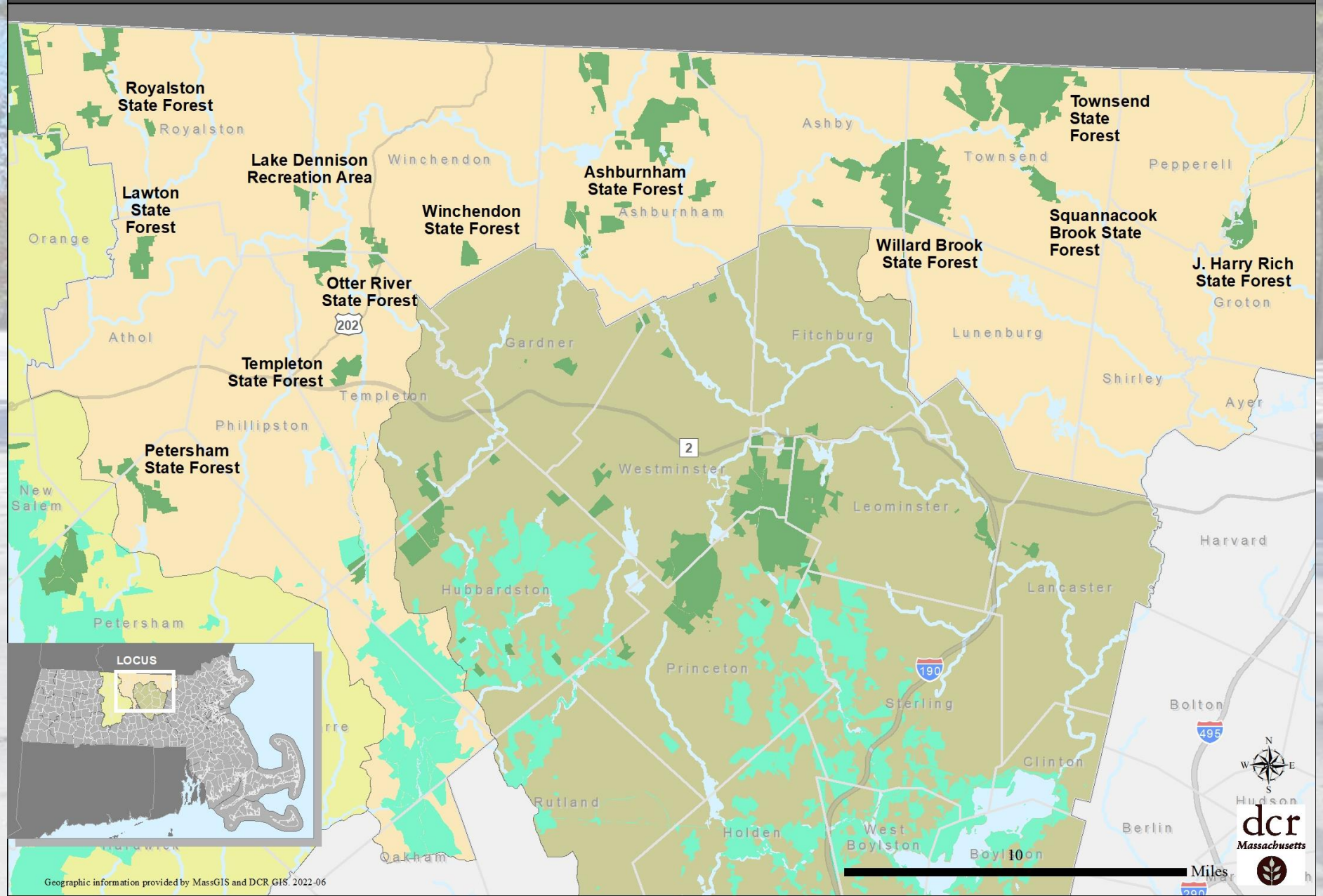
Protected Openspace by Owner
DCR - Division of State Parks / DCRS & DFG
DCR - Division of Water Supply Protection



Geographic information provided by MassGIS and DCR GIS. 2022-05

Otter River Complex

Protected Openspace by Owner
DCR - Division of State Parks / DCRS & DFG
DCR - Division of Water Supply Protection



Please Share Your Thoughts on Such Topics as:

1. What Facilities attract you to this park?
2. What Natural Features attract you to this park?
3. What Activities do you enjoy participating in?
4. What, if anything, prevents you from fully enjoying your visit to this park?
5. What activities, facilities, or services would make you feel more welcome or more satisfied with your experience in this park?
6. What is the biggest challenge facing this park?
7. What makes this park special to you?
8. Any other information about this park that you think is important for us to know.

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Public Input

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Additional Information

- Recording and tonight's slide deck will be available at:
  www.mass.gov/dcr/past-public-meetings
- If you have comments on this project:
  - *Submit online:* www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment
  - *Deadline: Tuesday, June 28, 2022*
    Please note: the contents of comments submitted to DCR, including your name, town and zip code, will be posted on DCR's website. Additional contact information provided, notably email address, will only be used for outreach on future updates to the subject project or property.
- If you wish to subscribe to a DCR general information or project-related listserv: contact DCR's Office of Community Relations via email at mass.parks@mass.gov

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Take Our Central Highlands Survey!

- Go to the DCR **Resource Management Plans** page (https://www.mass.gov/lists/resource-management-plans)
- Look for Projects Underway - Select "**Central Highlands District RMPs**" (https://www.mass.gov/service-details/central-highlands-district-rmps)
- On the "Central Highlands District RMPs" page, look for the "visitor survey" link
- Click the "visitor survey" link and take the survey
- Thank you!