



# Blackstone Complex Resource Management Plans (RMPs)



PUBLIC MEETING  
OCTOBER 8, 2024



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Governor  
**Maura T. Healey**

Lieutenant Governor  
**Kimberley Driscoll**

Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary  
**Rebecca L. Tepper**

Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner  
**Brian Arrigo**





# DCR Mission



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

# Our Core Principles

- Provide access to a diversity of outdoor recreational experiences & unique landscapes
- Conserve lands, water, and forests
- Advance climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts
- Support healthy communities
- Inspire generations of stewards





# Meeting Logistics - Ways to Comment



During the meeting:

- ▶ Use chat feature – comments go to moderator
- ▶ Raise your hand using the Zoom function, and you will be given permissions to unmute and speak

After the meeting, through October 31<sup>st</sup>:

- ▶ DCR Public Comments  
<https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>

*Please note that this public meeting is being recorded; the recording will be a public record*

# Tonight's Presentation

- ▶ RMP Requirements
- ▶ Blackstone Complex Overview
- ▶ Project Timeline
- ▶ Blackstone RMPs
  - ▶ Key Resources
  - ▶ Key Findings
- ▶ Public Comment



Homestead cellar hole, Douglas SF



# Resource Management Plans (RMPs) (M.G.L. c. 21 § 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.**

Hartford Avenue Stone Arch Bridge over the  
Blackstone River

# Required Contents

## **Said management plans shall:**

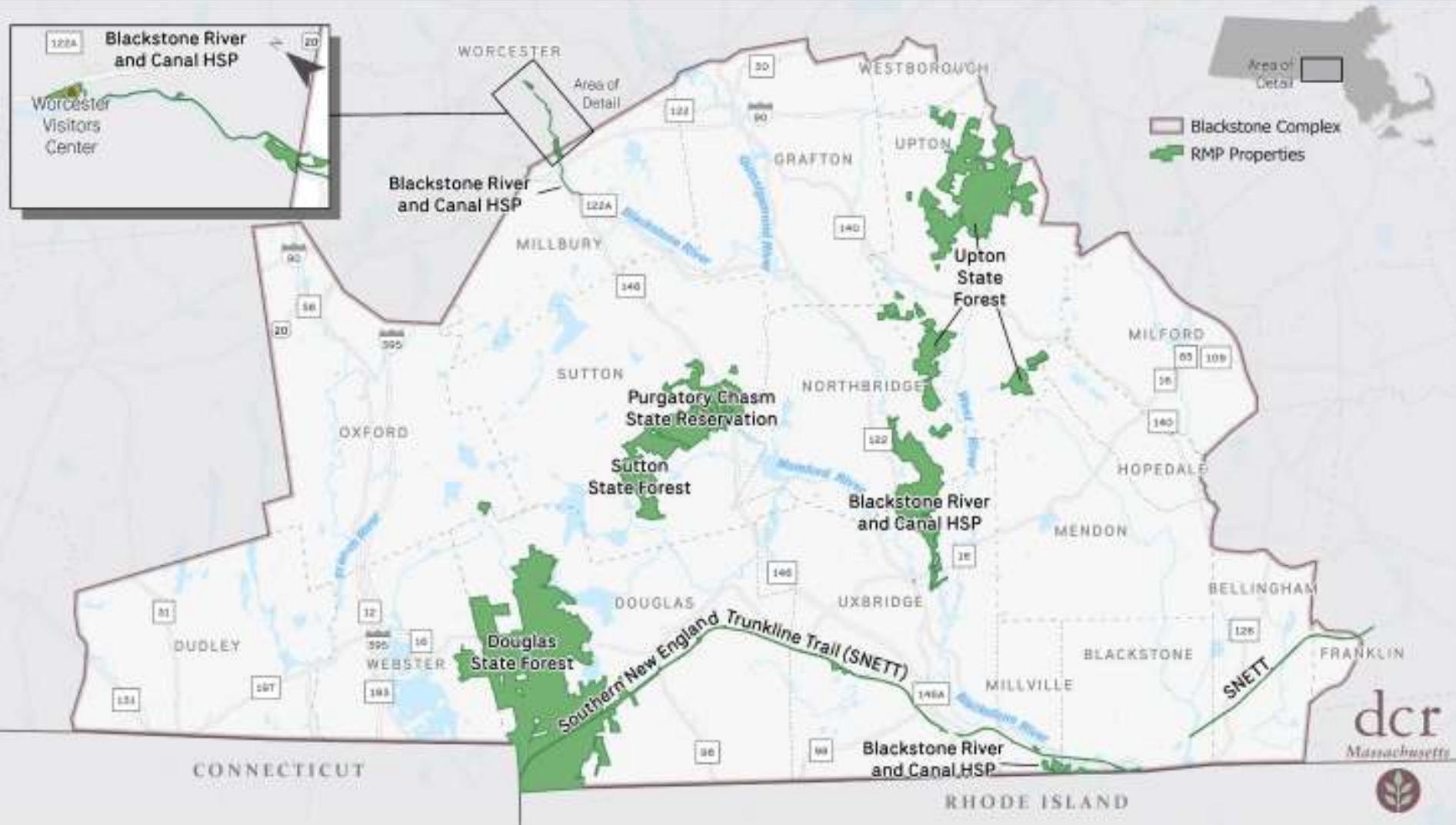
- Include guidelines for operation and land stewardship;
- Provide for the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources; and
- Ensure consistency among recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management.



Recreationists along the Central Section of the SNETT



# Blackstone Complex Properties



# Project Timeline

Activity	Date
Initial public meeting & comment period	March–April 2018
Presentation at Friends of Upton SF meeting	April 2018
Initial RMP Preparation (old format)	2018–2019
“RMPs reimaged”	2020
RMP preparation – new format & content	2021–2023
Internal review & comments sessions	June & July 2023
Approval of draft RMPs for public release	July 2024
Legislative briefing	September 2024
Release of draft RMPs	September 2024
Public meeting & comment period	October 2024
Presentation to Stewardship Council	December 2024



# 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	<b>Biking, mountain</b> <b>Canoeing/kayaking</b> Dog walking on leash <b>Fishing</b> <b>Heritage tourism</b> <b>Hiking/walking</b> Hunting <b>Interpretive programming</b> Picnicking Running, races Scenic vista viewing Wildlife viewing



# 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-Community 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 and Canal Tracts: 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).

# Upton State Forest: Key Resources

Metric	Value
Area (acres)	3,002.9
Landscape Designation	Parkland (28.4 acres) Woodland (2,510.2 acres) No Designation (464.3 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 <b>Hiking/walking</b> <b>Horseback riding</b> <b>Hunting</b> Picnicking Running, races Snowmobiling <b>Wildlife viewing</b>



CCC Camp Headquarters, Upton SF



# Upton State Forest: Key Findings

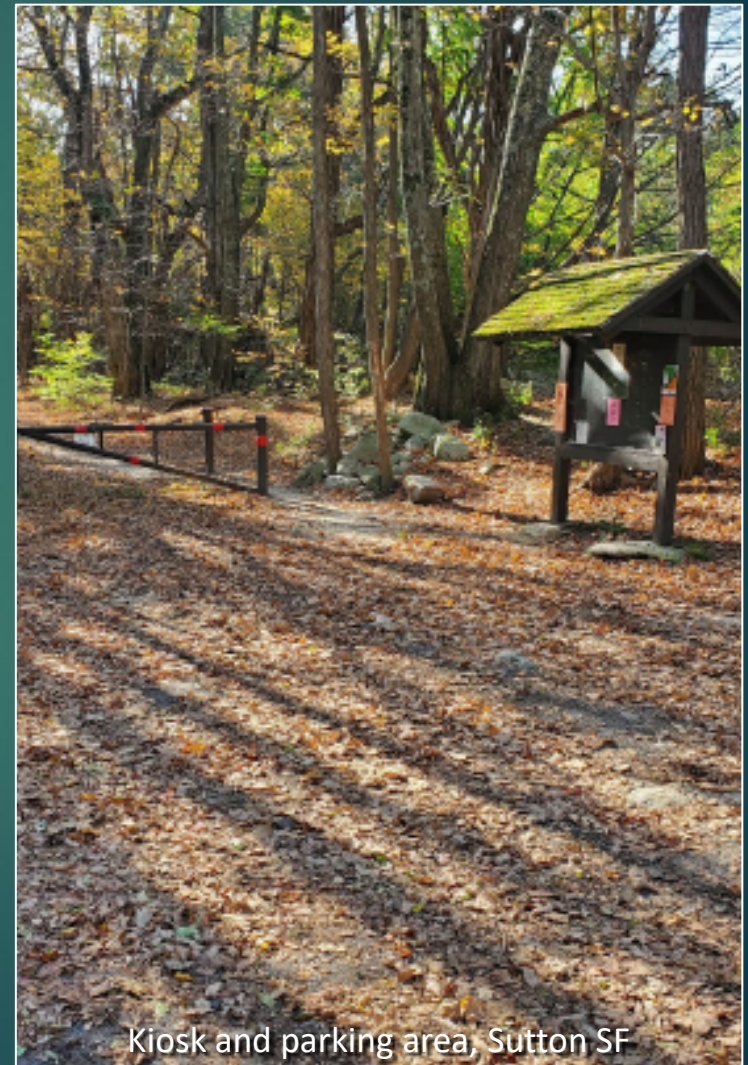


Beaver-caused flooding, Upton SF

- ▶ Monitor status of state-Endangered bat currently proposed for listing as Endangered under ESA.
- ▶ Develop, permit, and Implement Vegetation Management Plan for Southboro Street bogs.
- ▶ Finalize 2014 draft Long-Range Interpretive Plan, as required by 2011 MOU among DCR, Friends, MHC, and Upton Historical Commission.
- ▶ 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.

# 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	<b>Biking, mountain</b> Dog walking on leash <b>Hiking/walking</b> <b>Hunting</b> 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.

# 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 <b>Hiking/walking</b> <b>Nature study/photography</b> <b>Interpretive programming</b> <b>Picnicking</b> <b>Playground use</b> Rock climbing (by permit) <b>Scenic vista viewing</b>



Interior of Purgatory Chasm



# 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.

# 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	<b>Bicycling, mountain</b> <b>Bicycling, road</b> <b>Dog walking, on leash</b> <b>Hiking/walking</b> <b>Horseback riding</b> <b>Playground use</b> <b>Running/jogging</b> Running, races <b>Scenic vista viewing</b> Skiing, cross-country Wildlife viewing





# 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.
- ▶ Opportunity to expand 1.7-miles eastward.

# 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	<b>Biking, mountain</b> <b>Boating, motorized</b> Camping, backcountry Dog walking on leash Endurance events <b>Fishing</b> <b>Hiking/walking</b> <b>Horseback riding</b> <b>Hunting</b> <b>Picnicking</b> Running, races <b>Swimming/Sunbathing</b>



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.

# Comments

When commenting, please state:

- Your Name
- Affiliation (if any)
- Name of property
- Your Comment





# Additional Information

- ▶ Draft RMPs are available for review at:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/blackstone-rmps>

- ▶ Recording and tonight's slide deck will be available at:

<https://www.mass.gov/dcr-public-meetings-information>

- ▶ If you have comments on this project:

- ▶ Submit online: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>

- ▶ Deadline: Thursday, October 31, 2024

*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](mailto:mass.parks@mass.gov)