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| Name (First) | Name (Last) | Comment |
| Mary | Leddy | I am writing to submit a statement for the upcoming Public session on 10/10 on Martha's Vineyard concerning the Manuel Correllus State Forest.   Several years ago the local State Forest superintendent decided to create a buffer zone on each side of the fire lanes as a fire prevention measure. Large trees were pulled up by the roots with big machines and a swath was clear cut. The result was an area of low vegetation, which is maintained by annual brush cutting.   Little by little, however, a section along 2 neighborhoods has not been maintained. This area begins by Marker B-12 & runs along the back of Dodgers Hole & Island Oaks Developments & extends all the way to where the fire lane meets the Bike path on West Tisbury Rd. The forest has basically grown back in this section. Scrub oak trees are very wide and pitch pines are dense and about 6 feet tall. It's probably beyond what a brush cutter can manage.   I'd like to know what the State Forest plans to do to return this section to a safe buffer zone, which was deemed important to do for fire prevention years ago. Thank you.  Respectfully Submitted, Mary Leddy |
| William | McCarthy | 3 comments:  1. Deer ticks and lone star ticks and their larvae are abundant on the forest's fire roads and byways. A number of friends have had unpleasant encounters with these populations. I wear long pants and am pro-active about avoiding ticks, but began itching up a storm (larvae bites, probably) after some recent forest walks--so much so that I've stopped my walks and resigned myself to waiting for the first frost before resuming them. If the fire roads and trails were regularly mowed and trimmed, this wouldn't be so much of a problem. They're not. If you want to encourage people to use the forest, you've got to 'up your game' and more frequently mow the roads and trails, especially during this plague of ticks that we're experiencing.   2. Young people (adults, too!) are roaring through the forest on their dirt bikes and motorcycles, and the walking trails by me are getting noticeably eaten-up. Their presence out there is illegal, but they ride in the late afternoon and on weekends, when they are unlikely to be interfered with. The activity is constant. Dealing effectively with scofflaws requires more than a Monday-Friday, 9-5 commitment from those whose job it is enforce forest rules.  3. At the Covid-Era Zoom meeting where the closure of the Berwin bike trails was announced, the DCR allowed that parts of "Twisty" in the NE quadrant of the forest would be retained and developed as a "nature trail." No such trail happened, but Twisty, with its annoying, meandering redundancies, remains. Why, if your purpose in keeping parts of these illegal trails was to increase "connectivity," did you close off the long-used, pre-existing straight path that connects the high school's "X-Country" trail to the trail that more or less diagnols through the forest's NE quadrant. Because of this closure, you must either walk Twisty's loops or pretty much leave and return to the forest along fire roads to continue walking the trail. There was no connectivity in that decision. |
| David | Davis | DCR mows over three hundred acres of the state forest in absolutely straight lines, over anything that tries to stand in the way. Why do they feel that a couple of 3 foot wide mountain bike trails through some of the forest is a threat? |
| Julianne | Vanderhoop | The management of the State Forest has been limited and we need someone on-site to manage things properly. What happened over the Summer both in events leading up to the demolition of the homeless encampment and after were shocking to the community here on Martha's Vineyard. Proper foresite could have been taken so that things were handle in a more sensitive manner. I look forward to more discussions with menbers of the community and leaders who are waiting to speak.  Thank you Juli Vanderhoop Aquinnah Selectboard Dukes County Commissioner |
| Mary | Leddy | I recently attended the listening session that the DCR held on Martha's Vineyard on 10/10. There were several main themes. One theme was the concern about e-bikes causing accidents on the bike paths due to their speed. A speaker mentioned the she shattered her elbow from a bike accident on the bike path.  I too suffered from a major injury on my elbow from a bike accident on the bike path last year. I had to have 2 surgeries and months of physical therapy. I'm a year out from the accident & I'm still recovering to regain my previous strength & range of motion. At the time of my accident it occurred to me that the State Forest should be aware of accidents on the state's property. There needs to be some mechanism to keep track of when there is an accident. This data might be helpful in revealing a trend (such as e-bike issues) or a problem that could be rectified. In my instance the ridge between the bike path & the ground, which could be as much as 3-4 inches in some spots, was responsible for my fall. An ambulance driving into the State Forest for an emergency should be something that the Superintendent knows about. This vigilance might help prevent future accidents. Thank you. |
| CHARLES | DE GEOFROY | Unfortunately, I missed the recent session on Manuel F. Correllus SF. I worked for Manuel for twelve years as a conservation helper, which was my title. I also worked logging one of the blocks of White Pine on the South side of the Forest for Island Timber and Tom Robinson.  What is disappointing to me is the lack of any real plan to thin the blocks of remaining White Pines for lumber. All the areas where I thinned have shown fantastic growth. I have also commented directly to the State to volunteer to fill the awful cracks on the bike trails if the State would provide materials. I have been told by the Supervisor that there would be repaving, which never happens.   Also, why doesn't the State fix up the house at the headquarters so a Supervisor could live there? I also see that the management is lax on their pavement. They let erosion happen on areas where they recently paved, which at the entrance is collapsing the asphalt where you would think they would want it to look well maintained. Manuel was a good man and really cared about the Forest, and he would be rolling in his grave if he could see it now; I know the present supervisor means well. The problem is the money always goes elsewhere, Chas de Geofroy. |
| Christopher | Murphy | Two concerns- 1. The paved bike paths are in really bad shape with large gaps presenting every 20-30 feet in some spots. Also some large holes. I road bike on these, and find myself skipping some sections and riding on the street. 2. E-bikes should be banned from bike trails. They travel as fast as mopeds, which ARE banned from the trails. Many of the people who rent E-bikes are first timers on them, adding to the danger for other trail users. |
| Sharon | Britton | I write out of concern about the bare bones level of staffing that exists for the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest, a large, vitally important yet vulnerable area of high priority habitat that makes up the heart of Martha's Vineyard.   I've been a Vineyard homeowner for 31 years. I am frequent visitor of the State Forest, spending many hours throughout the year walking and cycling on the bike paths and trails and recording observations of flora and fauna. While I almost never run into forest staff, I do frequently see people violating usage rules by riding fast-moving e-bikes and dirt bikes on the pavement and trails. I have even observed a motorcyclist roaring down an off road path. Besides doing damage to the trails, these vehicles endanger slower-moving bikers and walkers, especially in areas of heavy vegetation where sight lines are not clear. Encampments set up by unhoused individuals also degrade the priority habitat with human waste and debris while increasing the threat of wildfire.   We are extremely fortunate to have a young, well-trained, dedicated and hard-working Superintendent in Conor Laffey. But Conor is but one full-time employee responsible for 5,200 acres and 75 miles of trails, not to mention 120 inconveniently located acres on Nantucket Island that he is also required to monitor and maintain.   The work of mowing firebreaks, removing fallen trees and trimming vegetation along paths is more than a full-time job for a lone staff member for whom no island housing has been provided, despite the availability of an unoccupied farmhouse/headquarters. There is island-wide support for the farmhouse to be used to house forest staff. If a Nor'easter lays down trees across paths in January, Conor is out there doing the difficult and dangerous work of cutting and hauling them on his own. Doing this work alone clearly puts him at unnecessary risk of injury.   The Correllus's website claims the property is "managed" by the state Department of Conservation an |
| John | Patrick | I was pleased to see the attendance of a number of DCR officials at the listening session regarding the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest on October 10. This 5,300 acre forest comprises almost 10 percent of the land area of the Vineyard and as such is a critically important area that is the largest single piece of undeveloped land on Martha's Vineyard, one that overlies and serves as a recharge area for the sole-source outwash plain fresh water aquifer that is the principal source of the Island's drinking water. The forest has been proactively designated as a "state reserve "by the DCR that hosts 34 state-listed rare species (NHESP 2008) and over 90% has been designated as Priority Habitat under MESA. There are a variety of habitats in the forest, including sand plains, barrens, woodlands, and frost bottoms. Almost 23% of the forest was converted to conifer plantation from the mid 1920s through mid 1960s. Unfortunately, these trees have proven to threaten native vegetation and now present a major fire hazard, especially now with warming temperatures associated with climate change and damage to pitch pine populations from the southern pine beetle.  The 14 miles of shared use paths surrounding much of the forest serve not only as a valuable recreational resource but are also part of a network used by commuters for transportation to and from work and schoolchildren traveling to school. Unfortunately, only 6 miles of these paths were repaved in 2018, and the remaining 8 miles are in significant disrepair, posing a safety hazard to cyclists and so uncomfortable to ride on that many cyclists move onto the roads in those areas.  Considering the importance and fire risk of the forest and its size, the single staff member assigned on a full-time basis (who also shares responsibility for management and operation of the Nantucket State Forest's 118 acres) suggests that the management of the forest is significantly under-resourced and has been for years. |
| John | Patrick | With regard to my first comment, some suggestions follow: • Attract and support more seasonal help to assist the superintendent in trail, forest, and fire road maintenance. Finding a way to provide for at least seasonal housing for these workers would be especially helpful given the Vineyard's housing shortage.   • Increase planning and efforts to improve wildfire mitigation, including more harvesting of diseased conifers and controlled burn-offs. Perhaps include some regular drone surveys of the property.  • Make every effort to complete the repaving of the shared use paths as soon as possible and create an ongoing maintenance plan for identifying and fixing problem spots as they occur.   • Especially with the advent of more electric bikes that travel at speed, better promulgate appropriate use rules for the paths (e.g. https://casetext.com/regulation/code-of-massachusetts-regulations/department-302-cmr-department-of-conservation-and-recreation/title-302-cmr-1200-parks-and-recreation-rules/section-1212-rules-of-conduct-on-dcr-properties-trails including a defined speed limit and the fact that NO unapproved motorized vehicles are allowed with the sole exception of Class 1 e-bikes) for the public at large with signage placed at all typical entry points.   • Attempt to include some education regarding the importance and significance of the state forest for the Island in the local school curricula.  • Have the DCR Commissioner make an annual visit to the Correllus State Forest. |
| Polly | Bassett | I would very much like to see more clearing of deadwood and mowing of the fire lanes, routine maintenance that was always done regularly. This is noticeably missing in recent years.  We do need someone living in the Superintendent's house, which I know needs to be dealt with legislatively, but it's imperative to have the Superintendent living in the Forest. The rent amount charged or subtracted from wages seems a minor aspect to a very important piece of the job.  I do appreciate you all coming to the Vineyard and listening to us. The Forest is important to many of us in many different ways and is a treasure to be cared for carefully.   Sincerely, Polly Bassett |
| Sonja | Henning | I live in Vineyard Haven and greatly enjoy spending time in the Manuel Correllus forest. I run the trails and ride the bike paths.   In general the forest is well managed and maintained. Areas for improvement include areas of the bike path that have deteriorated over the years or due to natural causes such as tree roots, etc. These areas of the path are a bit dangerous for inexperienced cyclists and riders enjoying the scenery and not paying close attention to the path conditions.   Throughout the year the landscape surrounding the soft trails vary greatly and usually the growth is well managed and cut low. It makes a huge difference to the runners, walkers and cyclists when the landscape growth is well maintained vs growing to knee height and above. I noticed during mid and late summer this year that the overgrowth was present for several weeks vs a few days, which had been the norm.   Thank you for all the wonderful work you do to maintain, restore and protect the forest. It's as important to the enjoyment and appreciation of the island as the beaches and harbors. |
| Tim | Boland | Dear DCR,  As a plant scientist and director of the Polly Hill Arboretum, I extend my deep appreciation for the immense responsibility of managing such a large landmass with little staffing. As you move forward to address the concerns of Islanders, I wanted to express that we can be helpful as plant biologists, having mapped the plant rarity in the forest, with our partners on-island, Sheriffs Meadow Foundation, the MASS NHESP, Nature Serve, and the Native Plant Trust. Beyond our work are the incredible local scientists specializing in wildlife management and who have known the MCSF for 35 years or more.   As you consider future management strategies appropriate to biodiversity protection, we are here to help.  Thank you for your recent public forum. The forest is the Crown Jewel of natural areas on MV, and we appreciate all your efforts to listen and respond to our concerns.  Tim Boland Polly Hill Arboretum |
| Prudy | Burt | I appreciate the chance to reiterate comments I made on 10/10/24.  The 5,000+ acres of the MFC State Forest constitute the literal heart of our island; they protect our sole source aquifer, are host to globally rare habitat, provide us with passive recreation (walking, running, hunting, horseback riding, bird watching, etc) and a quiet place to reflect and enjoy nature, provide the largest contiguous habitat for wildlife, plant and invertebrate species on the island. If this all wasn't enough on its own, the towns of West Tisbury and Edgartown receive considerable PILOT payments.  I disagree vehemently with the few speakers who suggested that DCR should set aside land for affordable housing, room for an official homeless encampment, or additional trails for ebiking (I think these should be banned). The forest will in no way benefit from being 'nibbled to death by ducks'.   I agree wholeheartedly with speaker Bill McCarthy who questioned the 'wisdom' of carving out parcels of land as outlined above. The following words from a comment he put on a 2021 Vineyard Gazette article re illegal trail cutting are pertinent to today's discussion: "I question the notion that a public forest must be "used to benefit people." Which people? What benefit?--aye, there's the rub! There's no end to the uses that men will make of nature when they view it as some sort of storehouse whose goods they are entitled to. Maybe one of the purposes of a public forest is to prevent man's myopic abuse of nature."  Continue to do your job and protect/steward this critically important resource for its own sake.  Thank you, Prudy Burt West Tisbury, Ma. |
| Paul | Goldstein | Sir:  I am a scientist and entomologist who has studied the wildlife at MCSF intensively since 1986, and I am responsible for documenting many of the rare species occurring there, including most of the threatened moths, bees and other pollinators. I've consulted with those responsible for the forest's wildlife and fire management since the 1990s, and I hope I can speak with some unique authority on its ecology.  Simply put, the MCSF is a globally unique property and the single most important conservation land on Martha's Vineyard with respect to rare and threatened wildlife, including birds, insects and flowering plants. It includes some of the most expansive remaining examples of multiple sandplain habitats and one of the highest, if not the highest, concentrations of listed species in the Commonwealth. I stress the need to continue to connect the management practices and priorities at MCSF with the specific, well-understood needs of the most threatened and time-sensitive habitats on the property. These habitats overlap considerably with those areas of MCSF most desperately in need of prescribed fire management both to protect wildlife and to reduce fuel loads and mitigate the considerable danger of wildfire. The management of this property is a potential win-win from the perspective of fire safety and wildlife management, and it is encouraging to see the current discussion.  Obviously MCSF has a history as complex and challenging as its management. The increasing pressure for housing, parking, solar fields, and recreational development, which led to the the illegal trail cutting through priority habitat in 2019 and 2020, is of real concern. I urge DCR to stand fast in protecting MCSF from further encroachments, and to maintain the wildlife and human safety concerns as the most fundamental and urgent priorities for MCSF.  Sincerely,  Paul Z. Goldstein, PhD National Museum of Natural History Washington, DC 20013-7012 |
| Michael | Kellett | See complete comments emailed to:  mass.parks@mass.gov. Thomas.Brule@mass.gov  Thank you, Michael Kellett  [Uploaded to website, please follow [this link](https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-correllus-project-comments-20241017/download)] |
| Tara | Whiting-Wells | Thank you all for coming out to the Vineyard. I appreciate that there is always more work to be done in communications. I am grateful for the continued stewardship of the forest. I have worked with John, Ginny, Chris and now Conor as a member of the horse council and as a member of the Friend of the State Forest.  There is a lot I want to say, but I think one piece I want to point out is that there could be more education about the 'designation' of the state forest and why it makes it different from other 'parks' etc. To just say we cannot is difficult to hear (not to me!!). When there was a presentation after all that horrible illegal cutting, they did a good job going over the history and how the forest came to be and has the special protection it needs. Talk about the sole source aquifer, the virgin soils, rare species, carbon sequestration etc. Perhaps the Friends can help with this?  Most of all I want to say thank you and I am committed to continuing to protect this special area and tell you all as much as possible that I appreciate you!!! Best, Tara Whiting-Wells |
| Louis | de Geofroy | Per the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest listening session Oct 10 2024  I am a Lieutenant on WTFD brush truck 731 - one of the units that will respond to any fires in the forest and Engine 721 an attack truck that will respond to structure fires on the perimeter. The state of the forest fire lanes is disturbingly poor. The fire lanes used to be mowed on a regular basis and occasionally harrowed/tilled, that no longer seems to be the case. Many of the fire lanes have mature trees with limbs that stretch far into the lanes and in some cases touch the trees on the other side of the lane negating their effectiveness as a firebreak. Significant mounts of standing dead and forest floor fuel are pervasive within the forest. Cutting of the diseased red pines in the forest has resulted in areas strewn with piles of tree trunks making them impenetrable to our brush trucks. Climate change is causing increasingly dry periods conductive to wildfire and mortality of the existing vegetation. This situation is a recipe for disaster(s). Proper maintenance and proscribed burns could reduce the risk yet these simple preventative measures don't seem to occur to any significant extent.  The forest lacks an onsite superintendent and personnel to manage and maintain firefighting capability that may exist in the forest or maintain the forest fire lanes. The staff housing that Manny Correllus and his wife inhabited has been empty for decades. I understand that there is state law that prohibits DCR employees from living in the forests but the cost of housing on Martha's Vineyard is prohibitive considering the pay for the position - surely there is need in this case for an exception. The previous superintendent did a good job with the resources she had but she has moved on to another assignment. She has not been replaced to my knowledge. I am a regular user of the forest bike paths. They are in disrepair, with some sections so damaged by age and shrinkage that riding on them is a bone jarring |
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| Charles | Hodgkinson | I am encouraged to see an updated management plan for the Vineyard's Manuel Cornelius State Forest. This plan should not include this crucial tract of land as a source of land for housing development. Our state representatives have proposed a bill to allow housing development in the forest. This is short sighted and does not consider the overall needs of all island residents. The island has a finite supply of vacant land and our water comes from a single-source aquifer of which the state forest plays an important role in preserving ground water quality. US Census data indicates during the 30 years of 1990-2020 the population of Massachusetts increased + 17%. The population of Dukes County increased + 78%. We must manage this unchecked growth more responsibly and in a more balanced manner while protecting our ground water and preserving the rural character of the island. The Army Corps of Engineers is working on a "build out" capacity study for the island. Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns labeled our national parks as America's best idea. Perhaps the state forest and Land Bank are Martha's Vineyard's best ideas. |
| Peggy | Stone | Hi there-  I am writing on behalf of West Tisbury Parks and Recreation,regarding the bike path in Manuel F. Correllus State Forest on Martha's Vineyard. I have received several calls regarding the deplorable condition of the bike path, specifically the section from the airport to the Youth Hostel in West Tisbury. I have heard several complaints about cracks and tree limbs poking through the pavement. This has been an ongoing complaint for many years. That section of the bike path is dangerous anyway with the extreme turns and hills. Adding hazards like the distortion of the pavement is potentially life threatening as I have heard of many people taking severe falls with concussions, broken bones and abrasions etc. I took a ride myself to experience what I have been hearing and I must say, it is a disgrace in that section. All other level parts of the bike path are a joy. However, this section definitely was harrowing to travel. I understand the complexities of getting money approved for projects but it is the responsibility your department to maintain the safety of the properties you oversee. With that section of bike path in West Tisbury, we receive constants calls about the bike path and would like to be assured some renovations are in the works.  I look forward to hearing more. Thank you, Peggy Stone Board Administrator  West Tisbury Parks and Recreation |
| Sherm | Goldstein | Dear Commissioner Arrigo,   I write to urge your department to allocate the resources necessary to repave the existing bike paths, brush cut the encroaching vegetation along the sides, and widen and improve the view channels at the several corners and hills as soon as possible.   I cycle the 10 mile path several times a week and the present condition is quite dangerous.   Thanks you,   Sherm Goldstein |