



FREETOWN-
FALL RIVER
STATE FOREST

dcr
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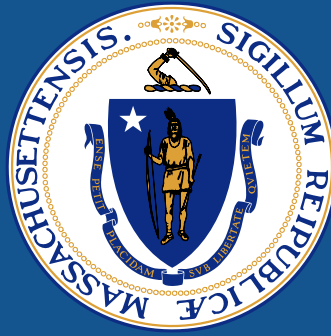


Freetown-Fall River State Forest

Trail Master Plan

Public Meeting – October 15, 2025





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
Nicole LaChapelle

Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)

MISSION

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

DCR Core Principles

Our Core Principles:

Provide access to a diversity of outdoor recreational experiences & 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 & advancing resiliency across our infrastructure, assets, & resources



Support healthy communities

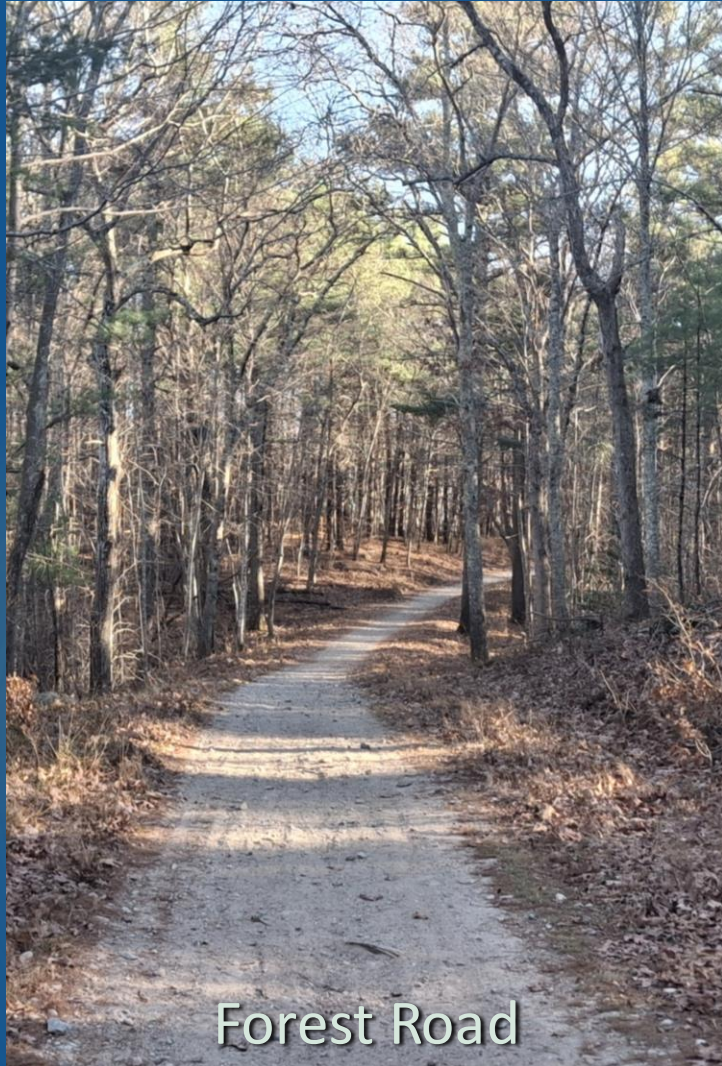
by providing places for people to connect with nature and each other

Inspire generations of stewards

by recognizing and honoring our legacy through partnerships, public engagement, and education



Meeting Logistics



Forest Road

▶ During the meeting:

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

▶ After the meeting, through November 6th:

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

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

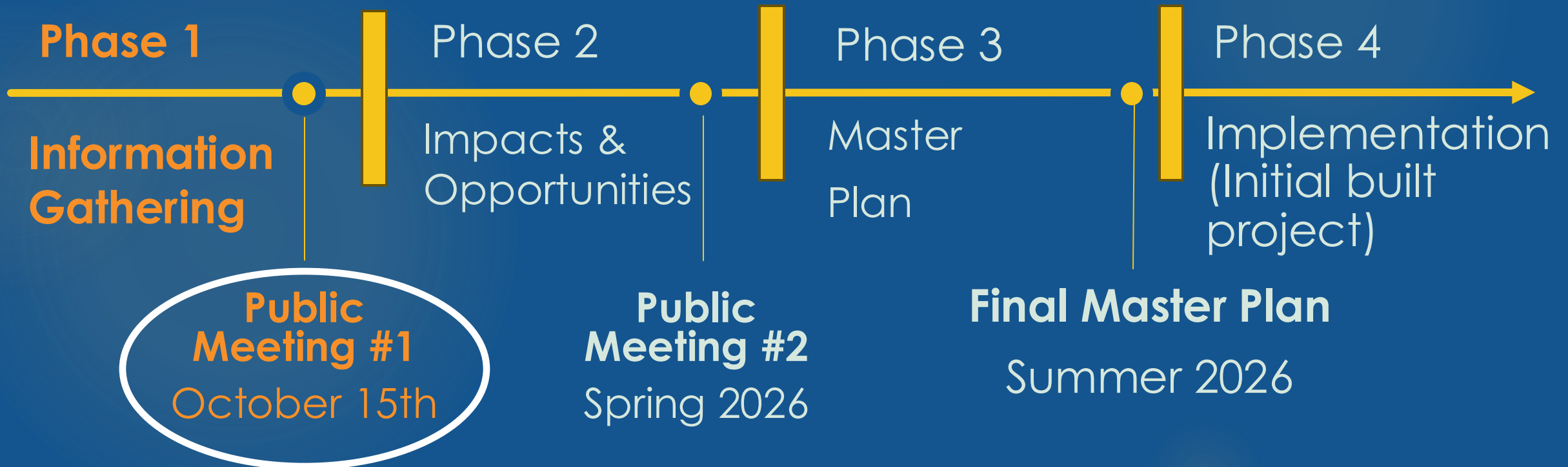
Agenda



- ▶ Presentation (~ 20 min)
 - ▶ Trail Planning Process & Guidelines
 - ▶ Goals
 - ▶ Existing Conditions
 - ▶ Feedback to Date
- ▶ Public Comment (~40 min)
- ▶ Additional Information

Trails Master Plan Process

- ▶ The planning process provides a forum for communication and cooperation with park visitors, stakeholders, and the surrounding communities to ensure transparency in DCR's stewardship efforts.



Trails Master Plan Process - Phase 1

▶ Get to Know the Property

- ▶ Trail Inventory
- ▶ Resource Area Mapping
- ▶ Identify Critical Management Roads
- ▶ Assess Use Patterns and Demand
- ▶ Involve Trail Collaborators/Partners

▶ Identify Points of Interest and Experiences

- ▶ Identify Main Parking and Access Points
- ▶ Identify Critical Connections
- ▶ Survey Users to Understand Desired Recreational Experiences

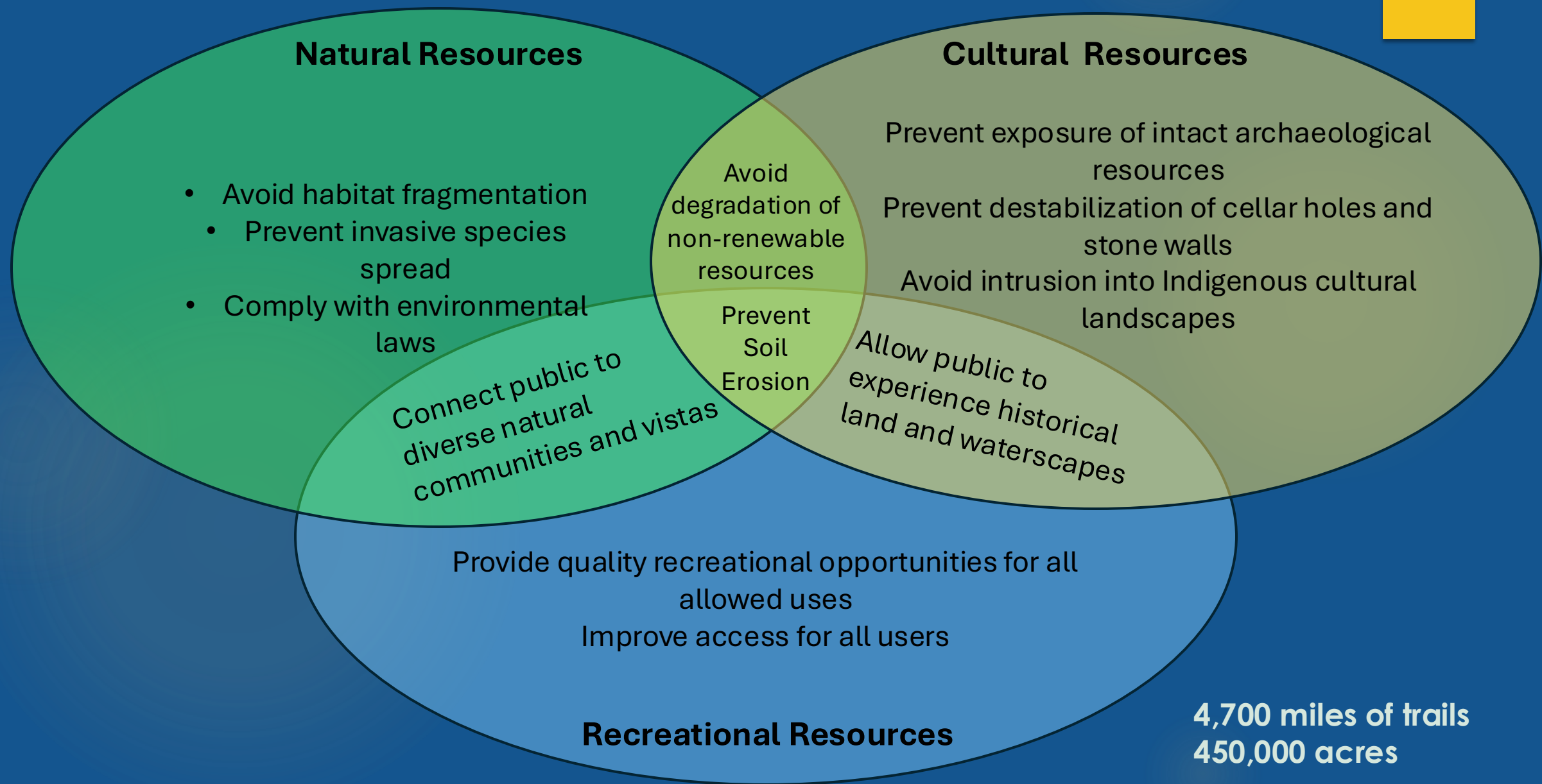
▶ Identify Constraints, Issues and Problem Areas

- ▶ Highlight Trail Problem Areas
- ▶ Identify Redundant Trails
- ▶ Identify Ecologically Sensitive Areas
- ▶ **Identify Culturally Sensitive Areas (PAL)**

▶ Develop a Plan (Phase 2 & 3)

- ▶ Assess impacts and opportunities
- ▶ Establish a sustainable trail system/network for the park
- ▶ Re-route and Restore Problem Trails
- ▶ Identify Stewardship Partners and Opportunities
- ▶ Identify Necessary Trail Use Policies
- ▶ Develop Education and Enforcement Strategies

Trail Network Planning with DCR's Mission in Mind





Guidelines

- ▶ The Trail network needs to:
 - ▶ Meet trail density guidelines.
 - ▶ Provide multi-use trails with varied experiences.
 - ▶ Promote sustainable trail design within the context of natural and cultural resources.
 - ▶ Create a safe, accessible environment.
 - ▶ Propose a trail network that is maintainable.

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual



The Metacombet-Monadnock trail to Mt. Norwottuck

The health and happiness of people across Massachusetts depend on the accessibility and quality of our green infrastructure - our natural resources, recreational facilities, and great historic landscapes. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides vital connections between people and the environment with over 4,000 miles of trails and 200 miles of paved bikeways and rail trails. Consistent and clearly defined trail policies, procedures, and program guidelines can provide inspiration and direction for managing, enhancing, and developing a successful and sustainable trail system for Massachusetts.

DCR Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual

Updated July 2019



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Landscape Designations for DCR Parks & Forests: Selection Criteria and Management Guidelines



March 2012



Resource Management Plan Freetown-Fall River State Forest

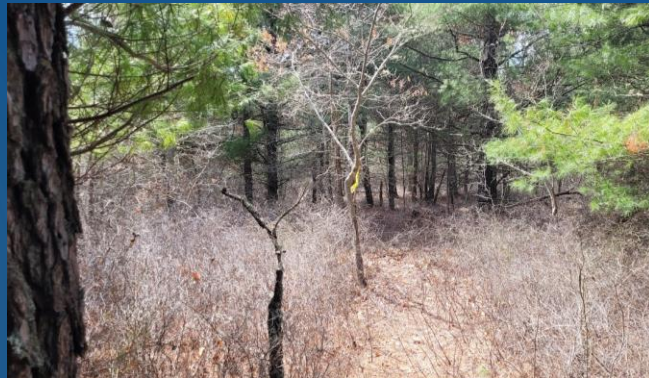


Adopted by the DCR Stewardship Council December 2023

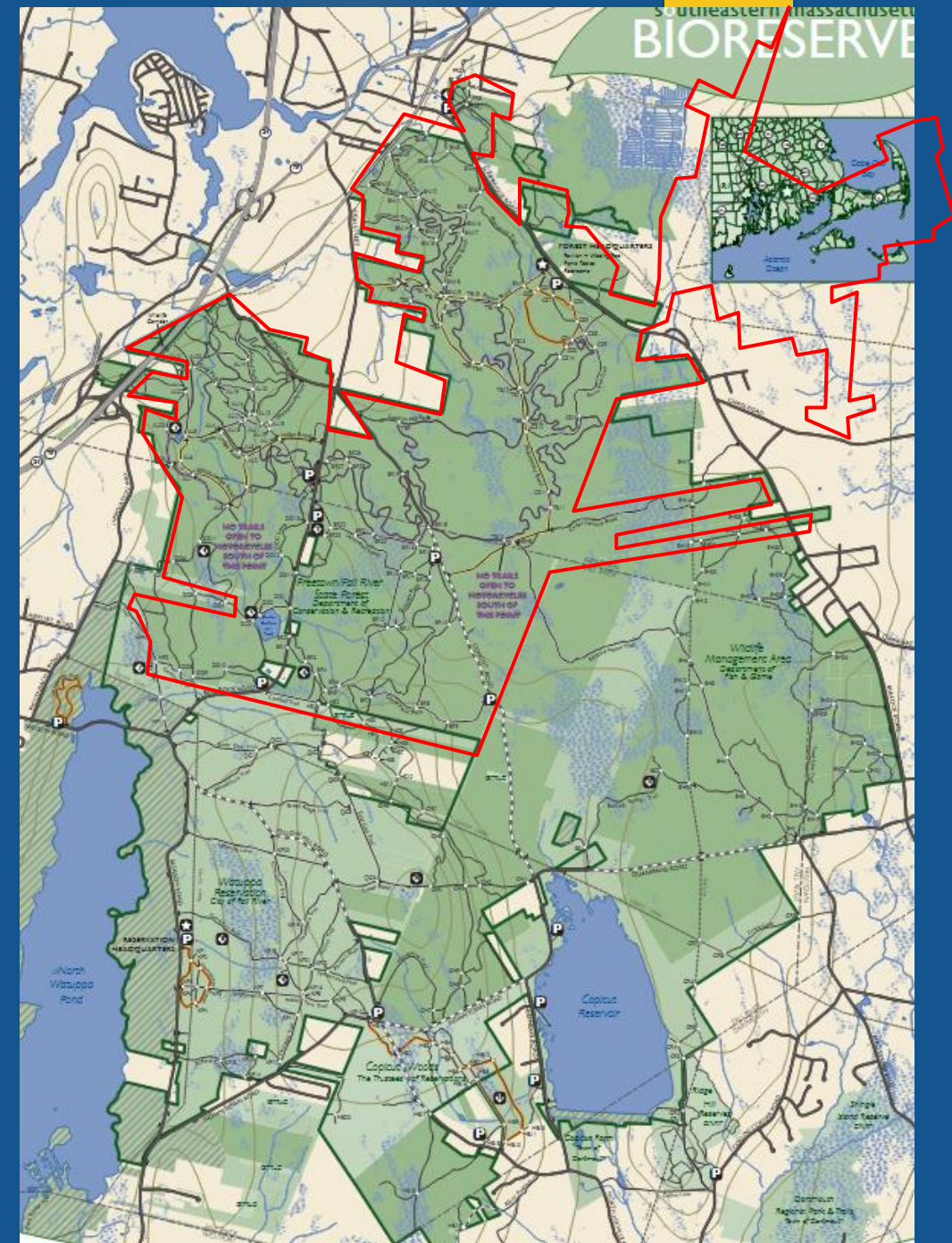
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Conservation and Resource Stewardship
Office of Cultural Resources

Goals & Outcomes

- ▶ Develop a set of working documents for setting priorities.
- ▶ Enhance collaboration between partners and stewards.
- ▶ Guide the management of trails within the context of natural and cultural resources.
- ▶ Allocating resources and adapting to changing fiscal, social, and environmental conditions.

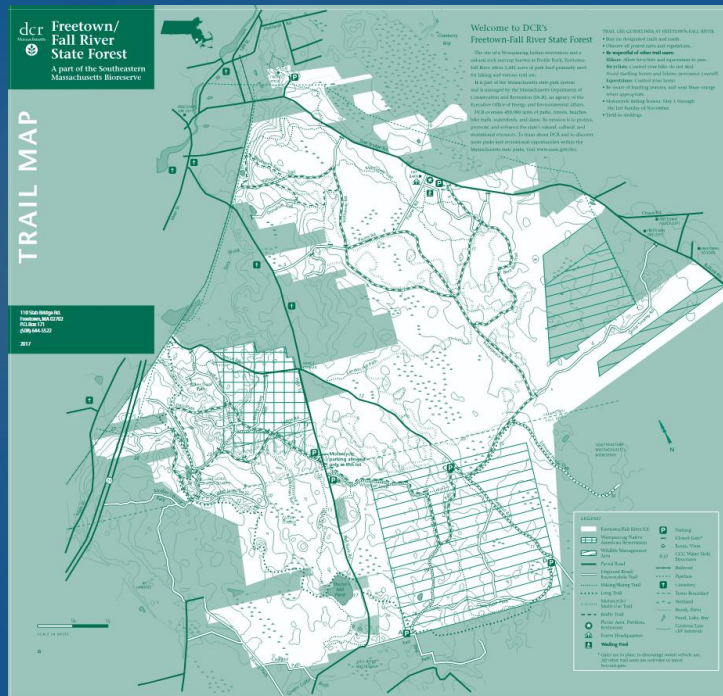


A satellite map of the Fall River area in Massachusetts. The Freetown-Fall River State Forest is highlighted with a red outline. Labels on the map include "Lakeville" at the top right, "140" (Route 140) below it, "Fall River" in the center, "I-95" (Interstate 95) at the bottom center, "New Bedford" at the bottom right, and "Freetown-Fall River State Forest" with a yellow arrow pointing to the red-outlined forest area. The map shows a mix of green forested land, urban areas, and water bodies.

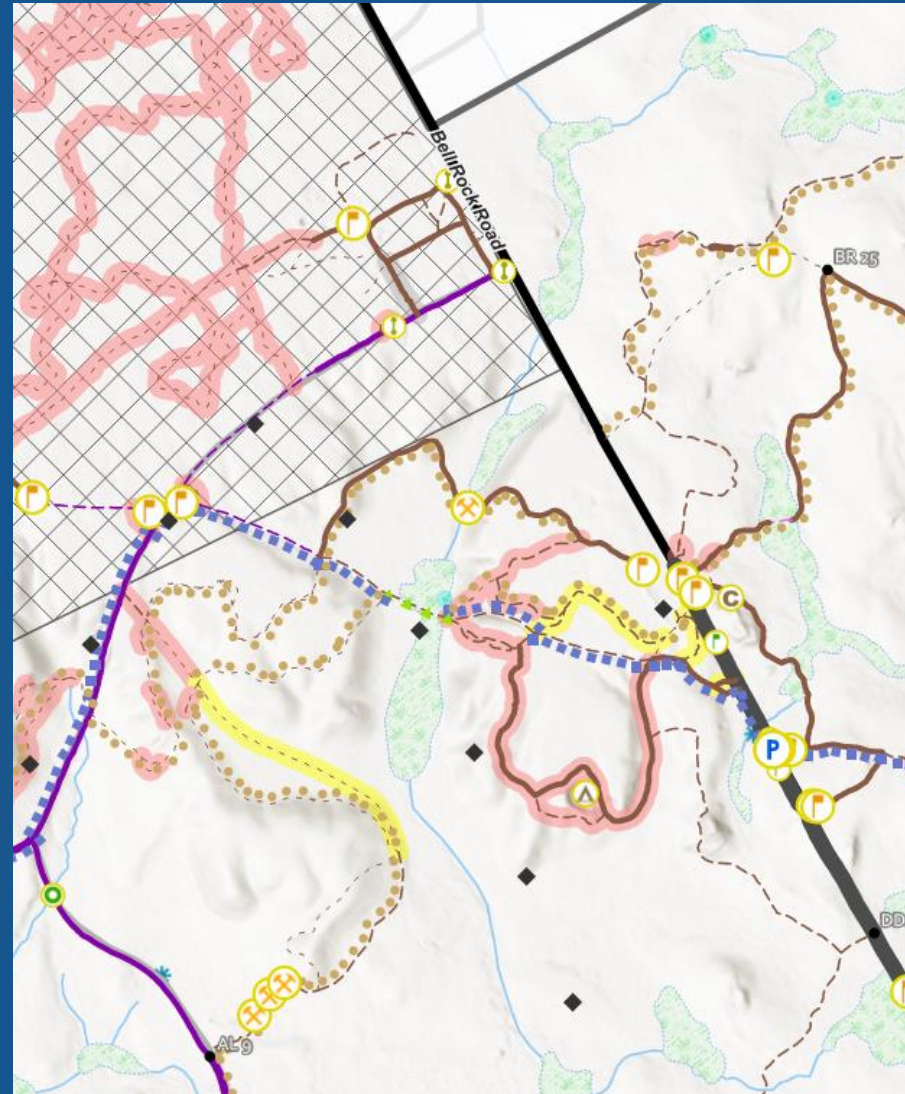


Existing Conditions Site Inventory

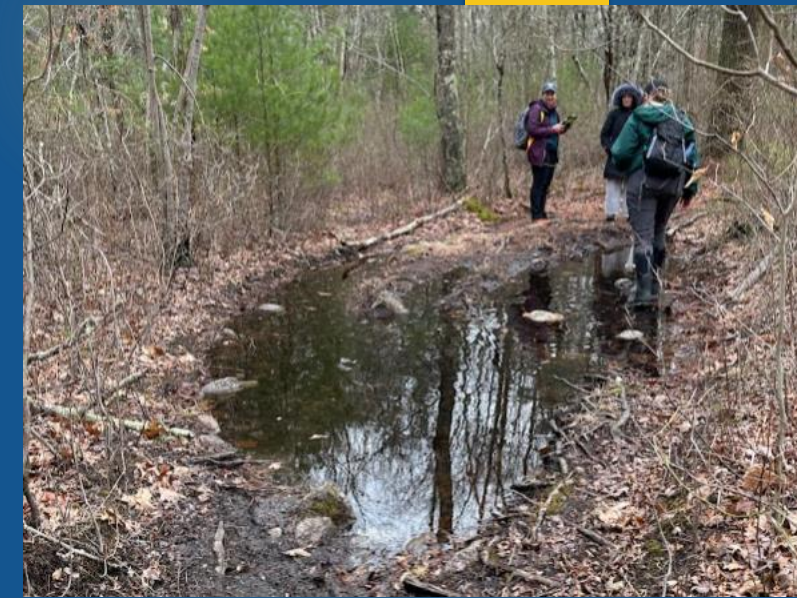
- 145 miles of Trails- Authorized & Unauthorized
- +1,000 intersections
- +400 damage points



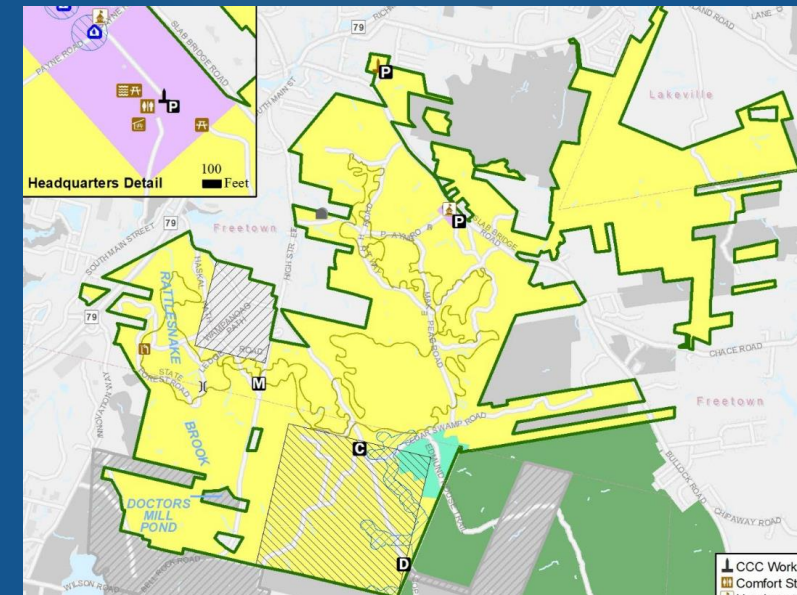
Existing DCR Map (Inaccurate)



Data Collection Sample



Survey points of trail damage

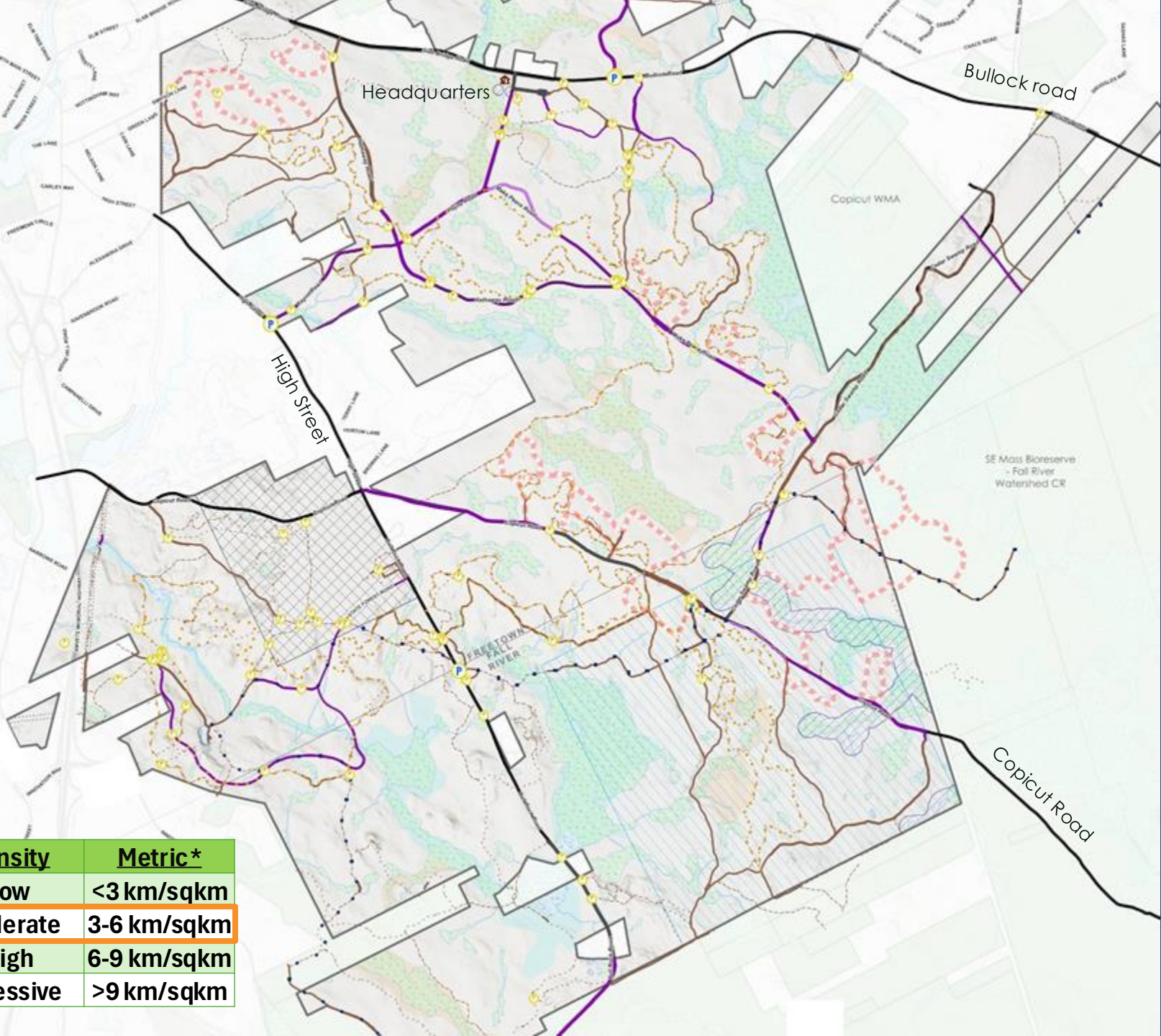


Majority of the site is designated Woodland.

Authorized Trail Network

88.3 miles Authorized Trails:

- (142.10 km)
- ~ 5.29 km/sqkm



Legend

Trail Surface and Width

Paved Surface, 10' - 15'

Paved Surface, 15' - 20'

Paved Surface, 20'+

Natural Surface, 0' - 3'

Natural Surface, 3' - 5'

Natural Surface, 5' - 10'

Natural Surface, 10' - 15'

Natural Surface, 15' - 20'

Natural Surface, 20'+

Gravel, 0' - 3'

Gravel, 3' - 5'

Gravel, 5' - 10'

Gravel, 10' - 15'

Gravel, 15' - 20'

Gravel, 20'+

Other, 0' - 3'

Other, 3' - 5'

Other, 5' - 10'

Other, 10' - 15'

Authorization Status

Previously Authorized, No Longer in Use

Unauthorized

Public Road

Utility ROW

Firebreaks

Trail Loops

OHV & Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

OHV Loop

Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

Forest Headquarters

Landscape Designation	Density	Metric*
Reserve	Low	<3 km/sqkm
Woodland	Moderate	3-6 km/sqkm
Parkland	High	6-9 km/sqkm
-----	Excessive	>9 km/sqkm

Authorized Trail Network, North Section

88.3 miles Authorized Trails:

- (142.10 km)
- ~ 5.29 km/sqkm



Legend

Trail Surface and Width

- Paved Surface, 15' - 20'
- Natural Surface, 0' - 3'
- Natural Surface, 3' - 5'
- Natural Surface, 5' - 10'
- Natural Surface, 10' - 15'
- Natural Surface, 15' - 20'
- Natural Surface, 20'+
- Gravel, 0' - 3'
- Gravel, 3' - 5'
- Gravel, 5' - 10'
- Gravel, 10' - 15'
- Gravel, 15' - 20'
- Gravel, 20'+
- Other, 0' - 3'
- Other, 3' - 5'
- Other, 5' - 10'
- Other, 10' - 15'
- Other, 15' - 20'

- Freetown Fall River State Forest Boundary
- Parking Area
- Trail Sign(s)/Kiosk
- Utility ROW
- Firebreaks

Trail Loops

- 20 Mile Loop
- OHV & 20 Mile Loop
- OHV Loop

- Forest Headquarters

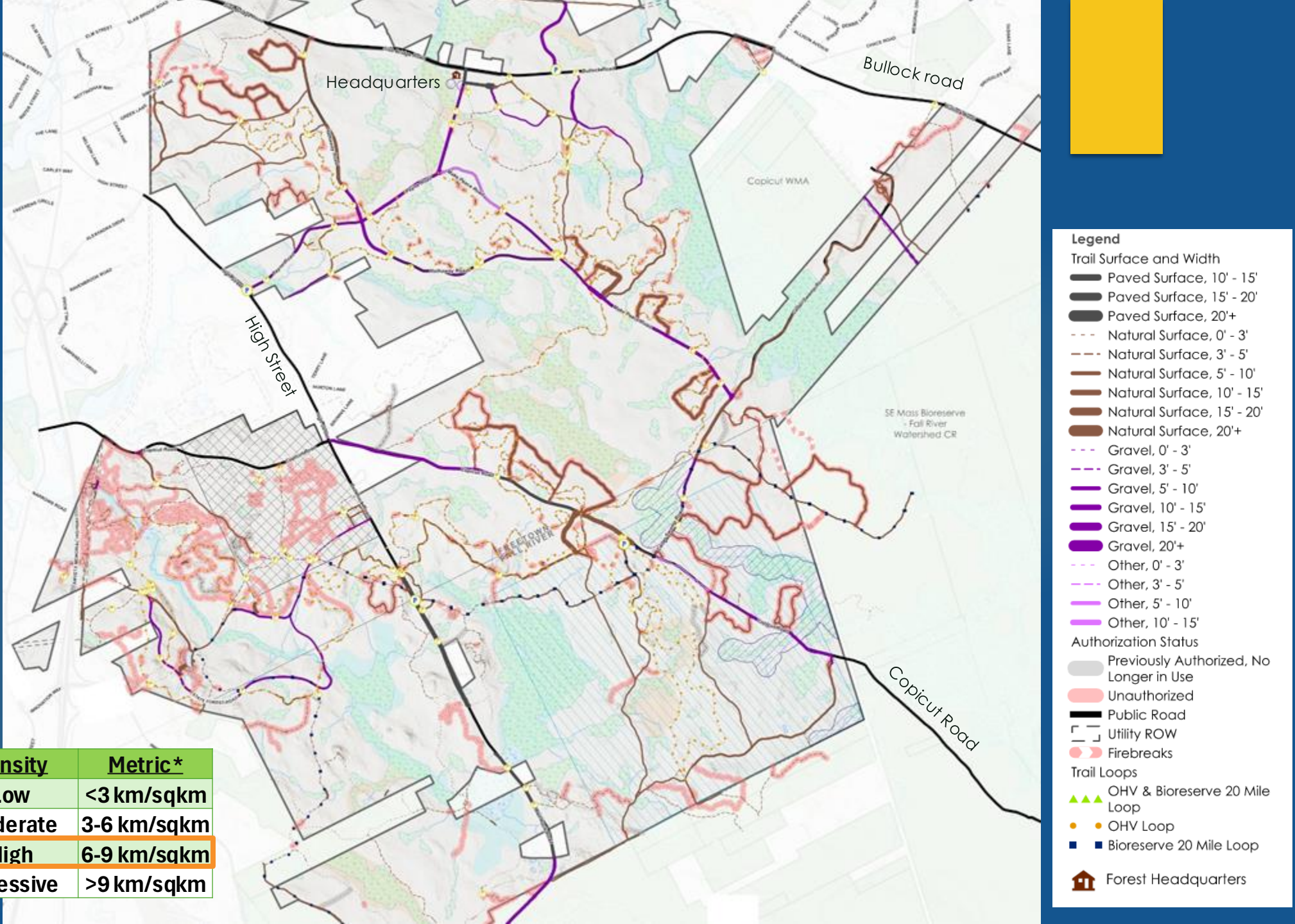
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-----	Excessive	>9 km/sqkm

Authorized & Unauthorized Trail Network

88.3 miles Authorized Trails
56.9 miles Unauthorized

- 233.67 km
- ~ 8.70 km/sqkm

Landscape Designation	Density	Metric*
Reserve	Low	<3 km/sqkm
Woodland	Moderate	3-6 km/sqkm
Parkland	High	6-9 km/sqkm
-----	Excessive	>9 km/sqkm



Authorized & Unauthorized Trail Network, North Section

88.3 miles Authorized Trails
56.9 miles Unauthorized

- 233.67 km
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Legend

Trail Surface and Width

Paved Surface, 10' - 15'

Paved Surface, 15' - 20'

Paved Surface, 20'+

Natural Surface, 0' - 3'

Natural Surface, 3' - 5'

Natural Surface, 5' - 10'

Natural Surface, 10' - 15'

Natural Surface, 15' - 20'

Natural Surface, 20'+

Gravel, 0' - 3'

Gravel, 3' - 5'

Gravel, 5' - 10'

Gravel, 10' - 15'

Gravel, 15' - 20'

Gravel, 20'+

Other, 0' - 3'

Other, 3' - 5'

Other, 5' - 10'

Other, 10' - 15'

Authorization Status

Previously Authorized, No Longer in Use

Unauthorized

Public Road

Utility ROW

Firebreaks

Trail Loops

OHV & Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

OHV Loop

Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

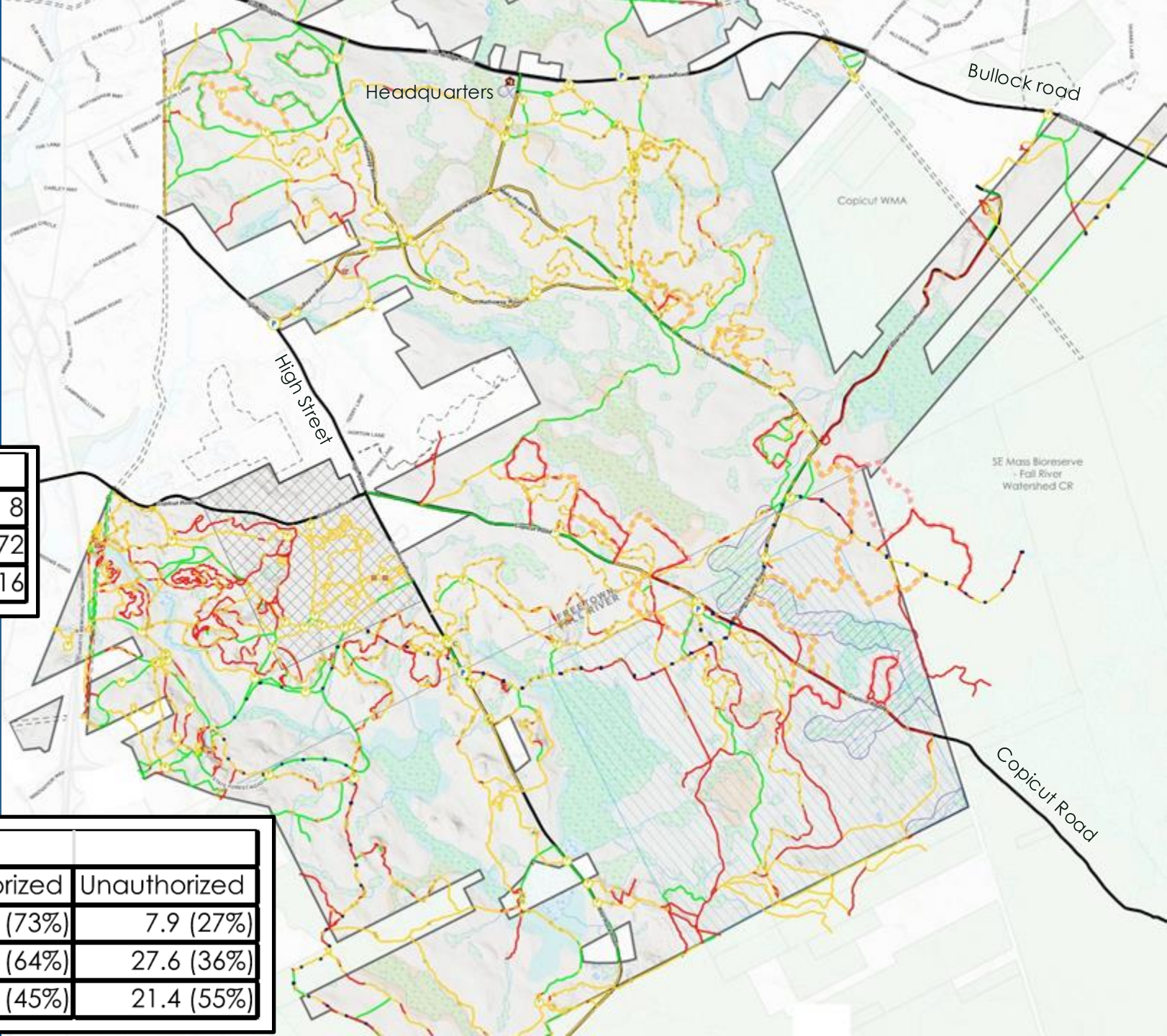
Forest Headquarters

Authorized & Unauthorized Trail Network

TRAIL CONDITIONS

Damage Points	
Encroachment Issue	8
Road Damage	72
Trail Damage	416

Trails			
Condition	Total Miles	Authorized	Unauthorized
Good	28.8(20%)	21.0 (73%)	7.9 (27%)
Fair	77.1(53%)	49.6 (64%)	27.6 (36%)
Poor	39.2(27%)	17.8 (45%)	21.4 (55%)



Legend

Freetown Fall River State Forest Boundary

Parking Area

Trail Sign(s)/Kiosk

Recreation Points

Building

Campsite

Historic/Cultural Site

Picnic Table/Area

Vista

Problem Points

Encroachment Issue

Road Damage

Trail Damage

Condition

Good

Fair

Poor

Public Road

Firebreaks

Utility ROW

Trail Loops

OHV & Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop

OHV Loop

Forest Headquarters

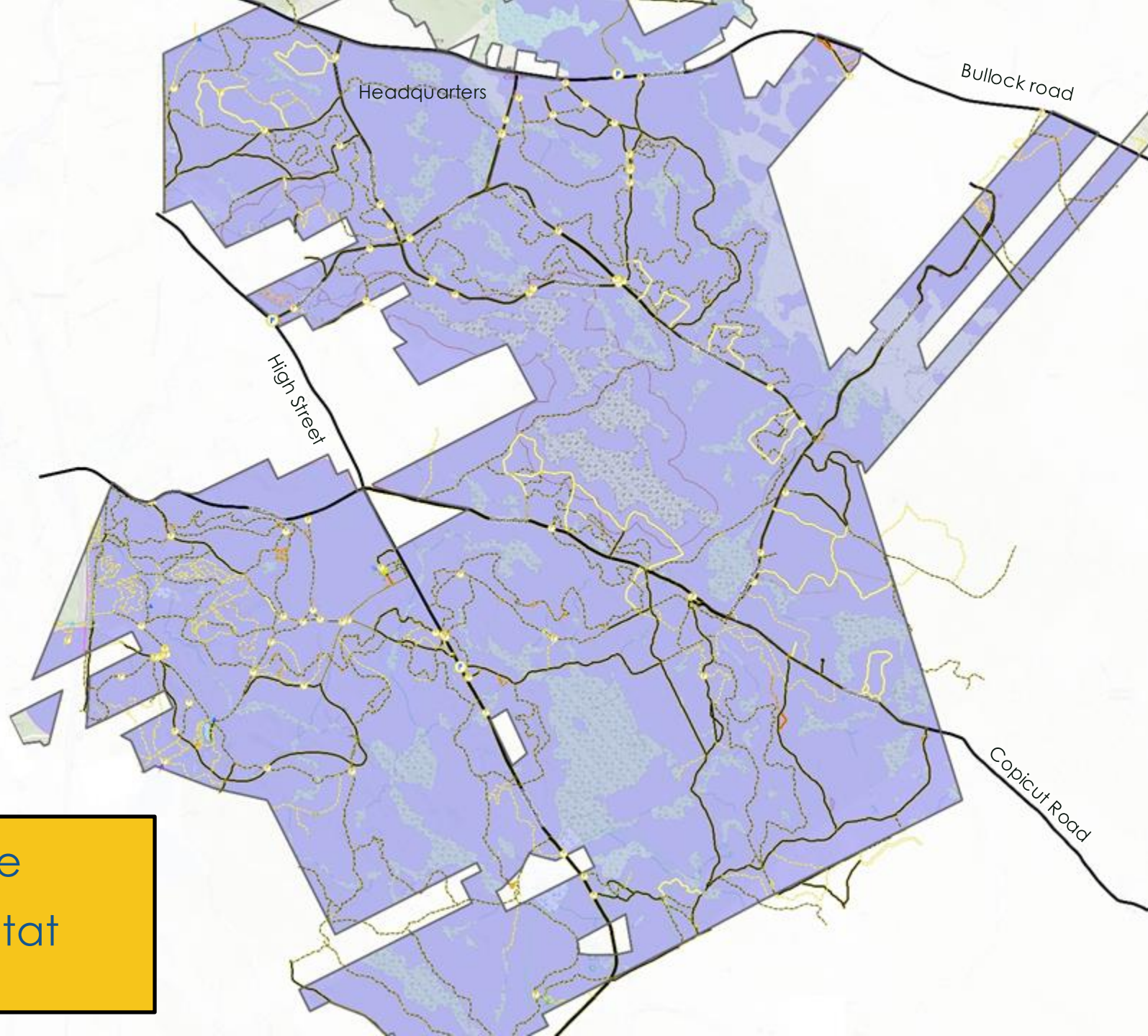
Authorized Trail Network, North Section



Legend

- Freetown Fall River State Forest Boundary
- Parking Area
- Trail Sign(s)/Kiosk
- Recreation Points**
 - Building
 - Campsite
 - Historic/Cultural Site
 - Picnic Table/Area
 - Vista
- Problem Points**
 - Encroachment Issue
 - Road Damage
 - Trail Damage
- Condition**
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Public Road
 - Firebreaks
 - Utility ROW
- Trail Loops**
 - OHV & Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop
 - Bioreserve 20 Mile Loop
 - OHV Loop
 - Forest Headquarters

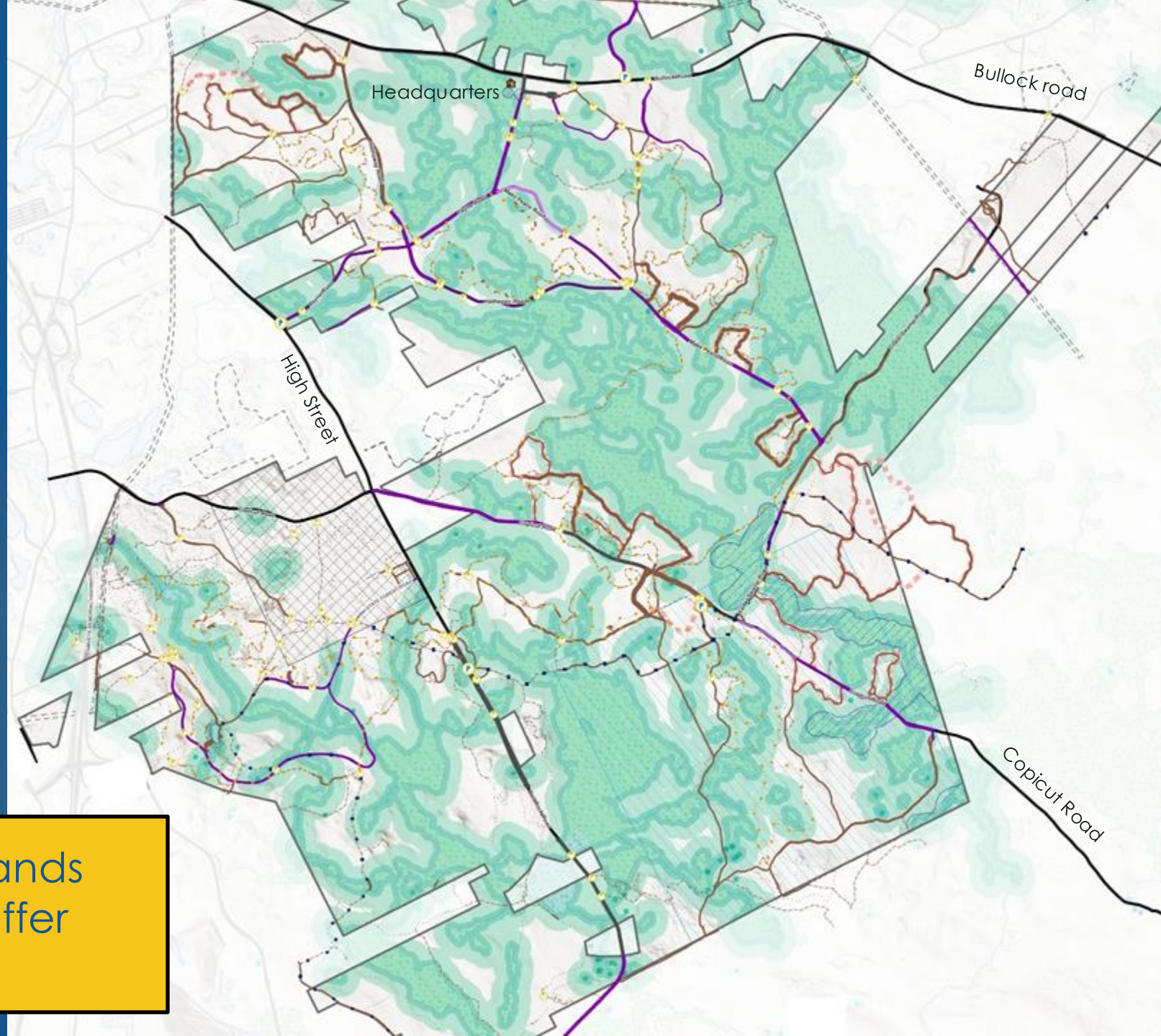
Natural Resources



~87% is Rare
Species Habitat

Natural Resources, Wetlands

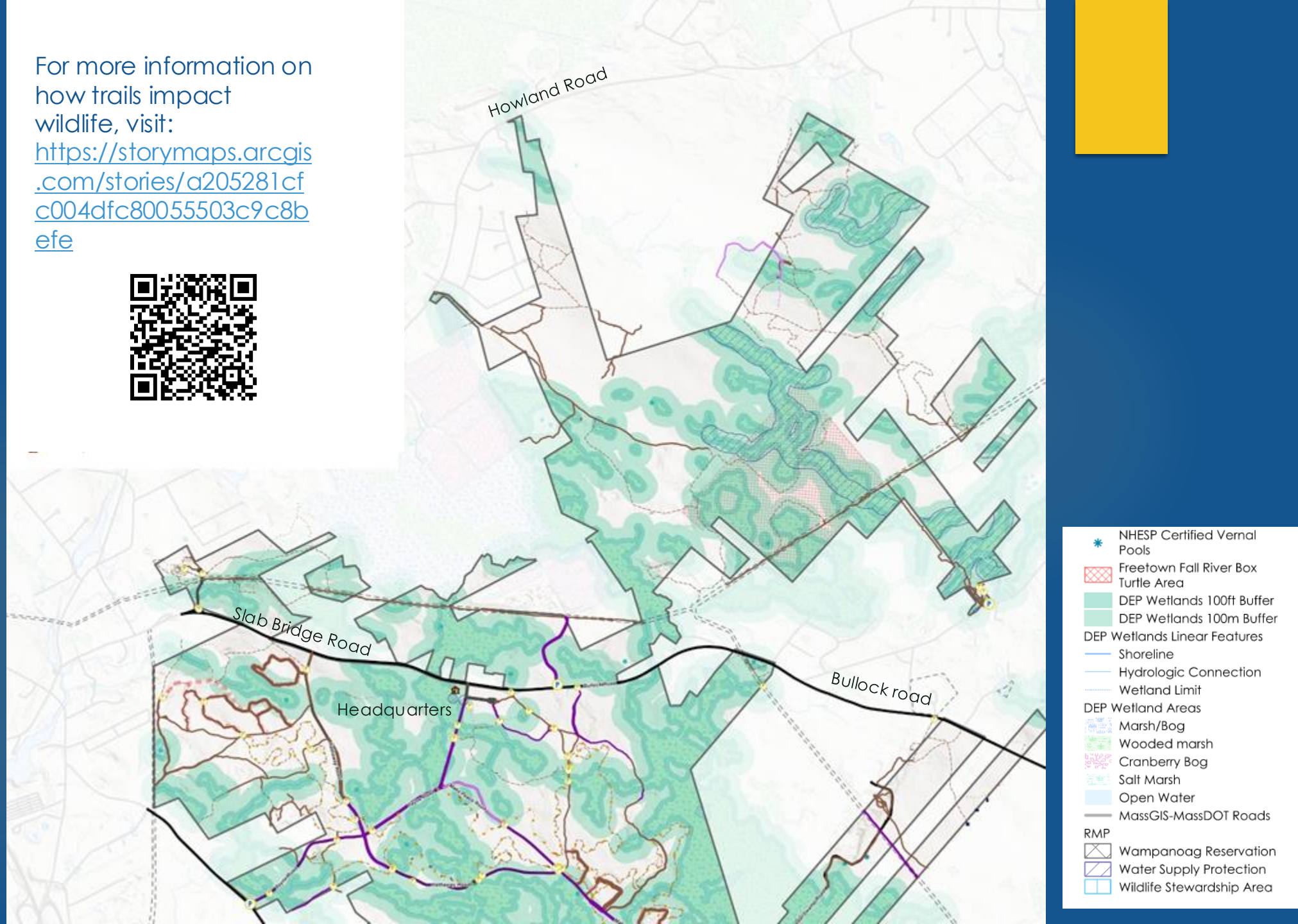
~34% is Wetlands with 100' buffer



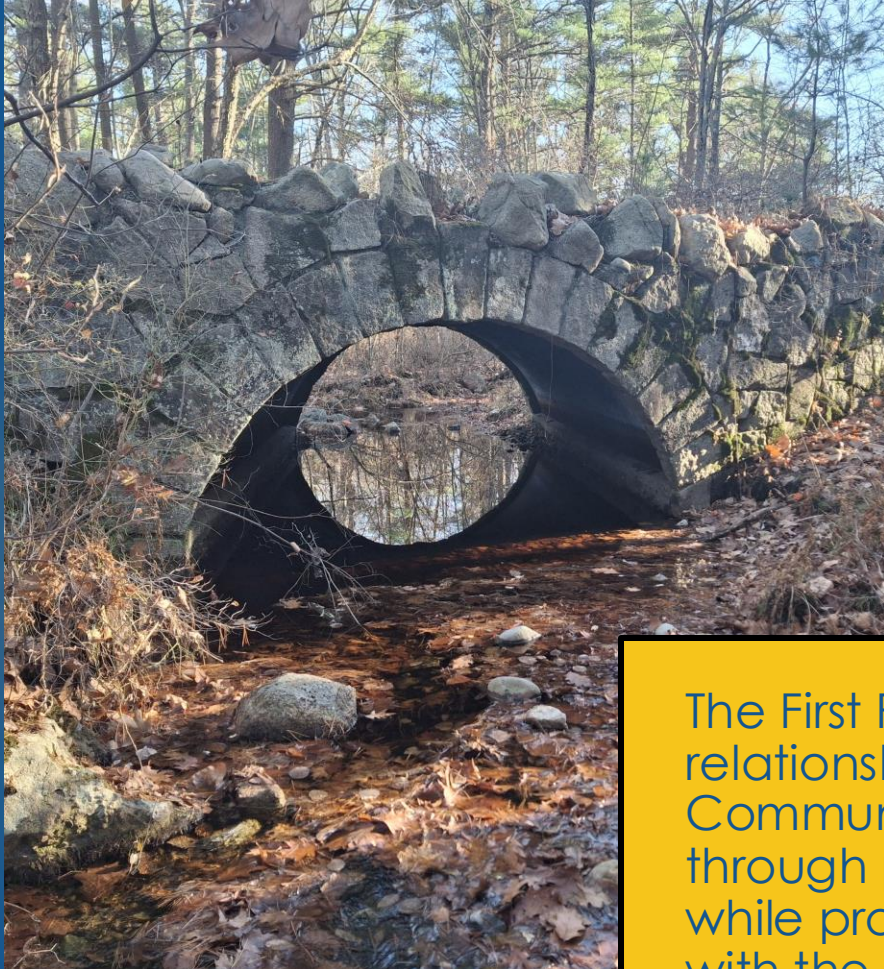
- NHESP Certified Vernal Pools
- Freetown Fall River Box Turtle Area
- DEP Wetlands 100ft Buffer
- DEP Wetlands 100m Buffer
- DEP Wetlands Linear Features
 - Shoreline
 - Hydrologic Connection
 - Wetland Limit
- DEP Wetland Areas
 - Marsh/Bog
 - Wooded marsh
 - Cranberry Bog
 - Salt Marsh
- Open Water
- MassGIS-MassDOT Roads
- RMP
 - Wampanoag Reservation
 - Water Supply Protection
 - Wildlife Stewardship Area

Natural Resources, North Section

For more information on how trails impact wildlife, visit:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a205281cf-c004dfc80055503c9c8befe>



Sensitive Resource Areas



- ▶ 96 inventoried, field-verified, and documented historic and archaeological resources
 - ▶ buildings, structures, objects, landscapes, and archaeological sites.
 - ▶ predominantly with pre-twentieth-century settlement in the area, and activities of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.
 - ▶ 4,700 of the 6,633 acres (71%) are designated as archeologically significant lands.

The First Peoples First Stewards Partnership works to build reciprocal relationships between the DCR and Tribal Governments and Indigenous Community Stakeholders. These relationships will enhance DCR's work through providing an additional lens of culturally responsive stewardship while providing access and opportunities for Native people to connect with the land, water, and our natural world.

Public Survey Results To-Date

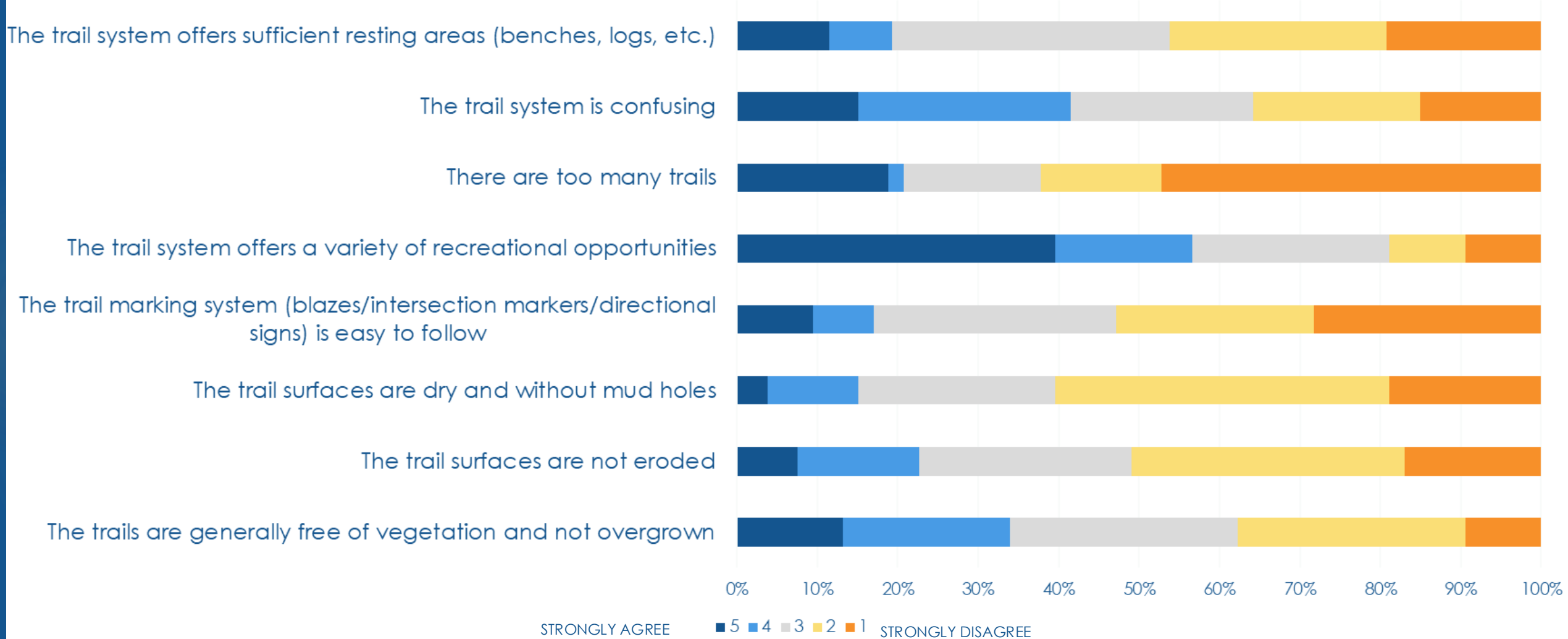
- ▶ 55 responses (from April to Oct 14th)
- ▶ Responses are on a scale of 1 to 5 where:
 - ▶ 1 equals STRONGLY DISAGREE
 - ▶ 5 equals STRONGLY AGREE



Public Survey Results To-Date,

Trail Condition and Navigability

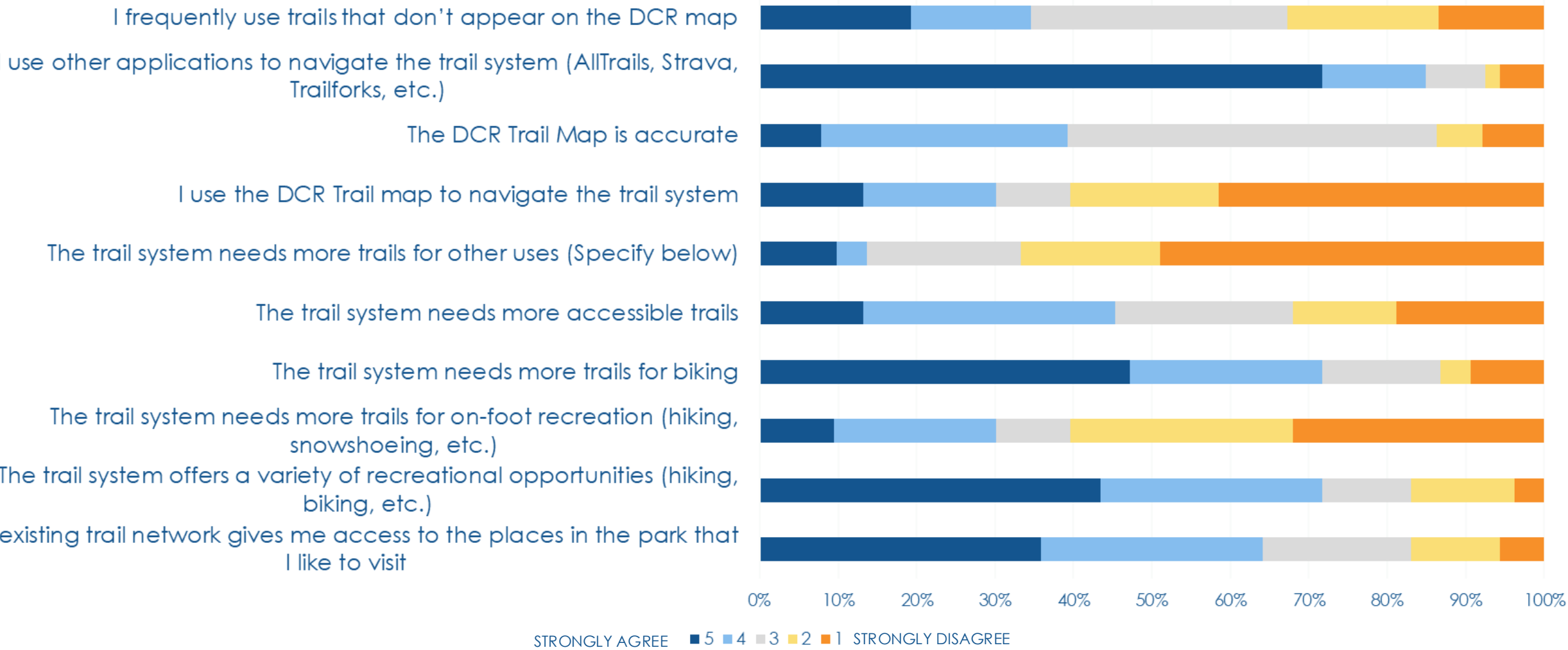
Trail Condition and Navigability



Public Survey Results To-Date,

Site Access and Recreational Opportunities

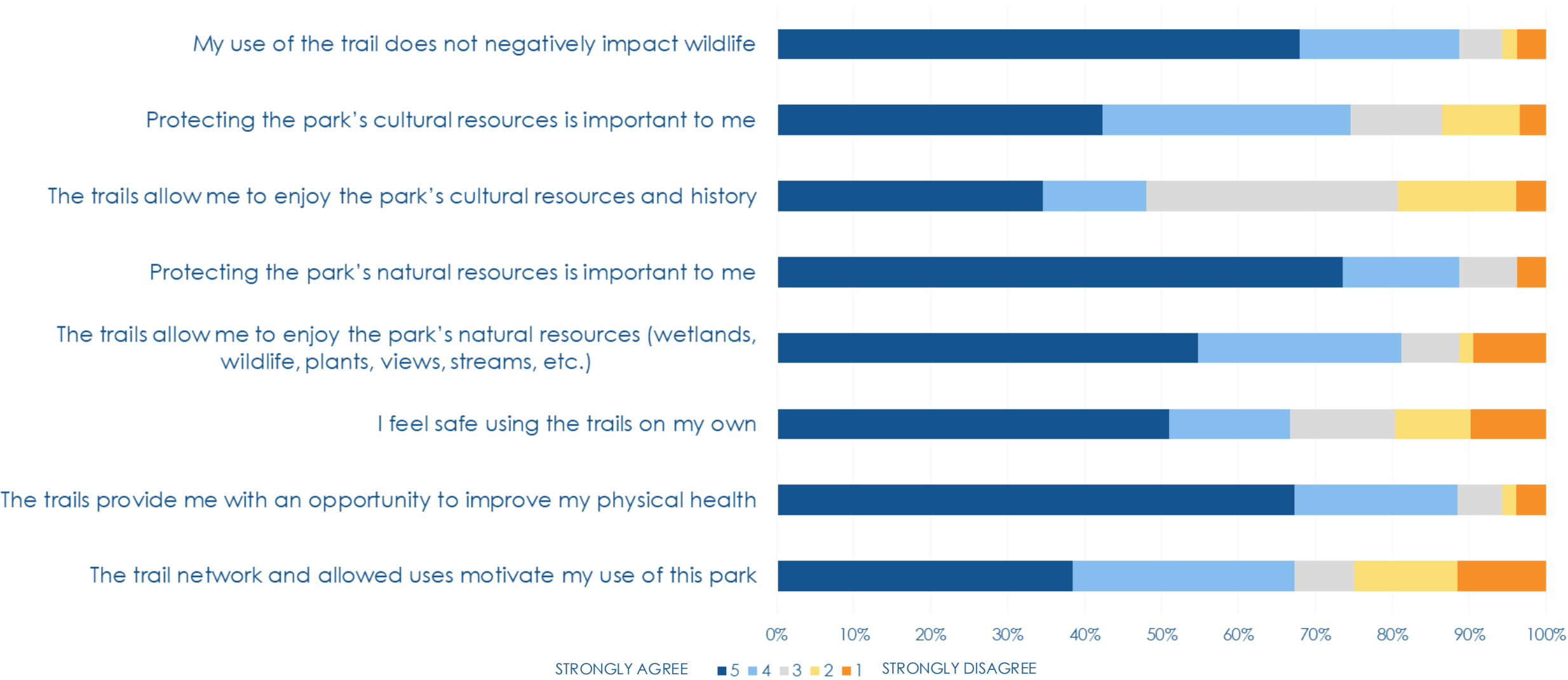
Site Access and Recreational Opportunities



Public Survey Results To-Date,

Trail Use Motivation

Trail Use Motivation



Meeting Logistics - Discussion



Forest Road

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

Discussion Questions



- ▶ How do you use the State Forest?
- ▶ What is your favorite trail at this park and why?
- ▶ What is your least favorite trail and why?
- ▶ What, if anything, prevents you from fully enjoying the trails at this park?
- ▶ What activities, facilities, or services would make you feel more welcome or more satisfied with your trail experience in this park?
- ▶ What is the biggest challenge facing this park's trails?
- ▶ Any other information about this park's trails that you think is important for us to know.

Public Comment

- ▶ **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: October 29, 2025
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

Thank you!

