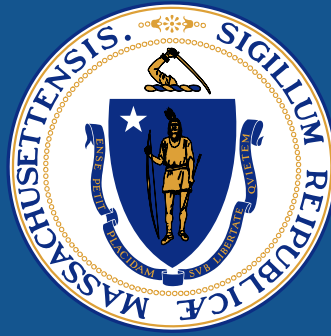




Lowell – Dracut – Tyngsboro State Forest Trail Master Plan

Public Meeting– November 6, 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



2



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



4



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



- ▶ **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 20th:**
 - ▶ 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

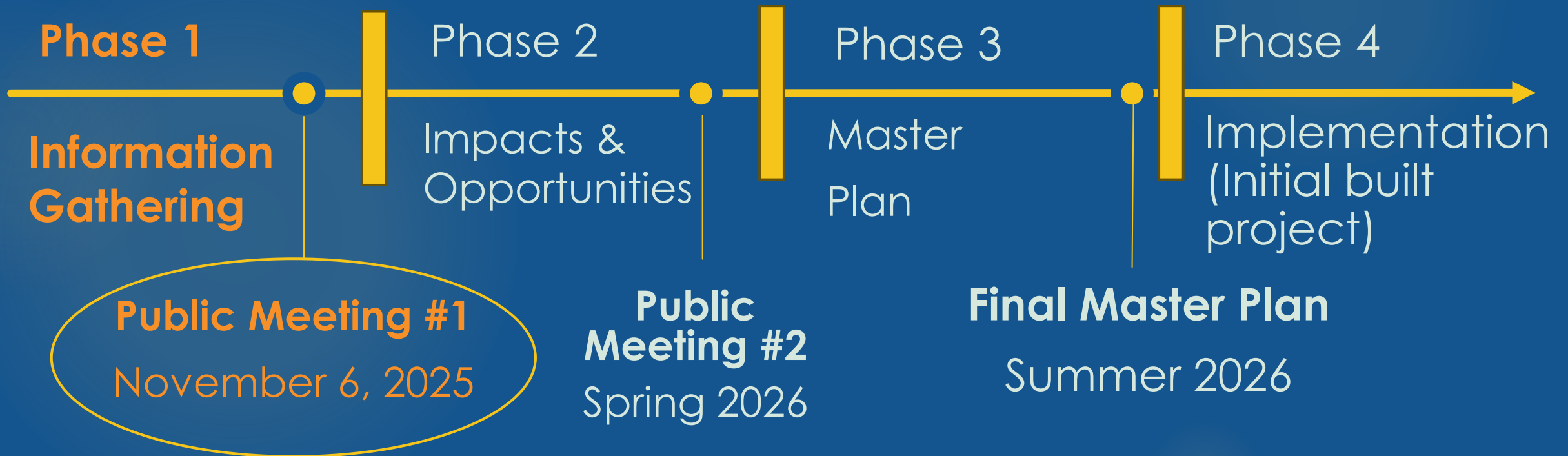
Agenda



- ▶ Presentation (~ 20 min)
 - ▶ Trail Planning Process & Guidelines
 - ▶ Goals & Outcomes
 - ▶ Existing Conditions
 - ▶ Feedback to Date
- ▶ Collaborator 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
- ▶ **Mountain bike assessment (Tulip Trails)**

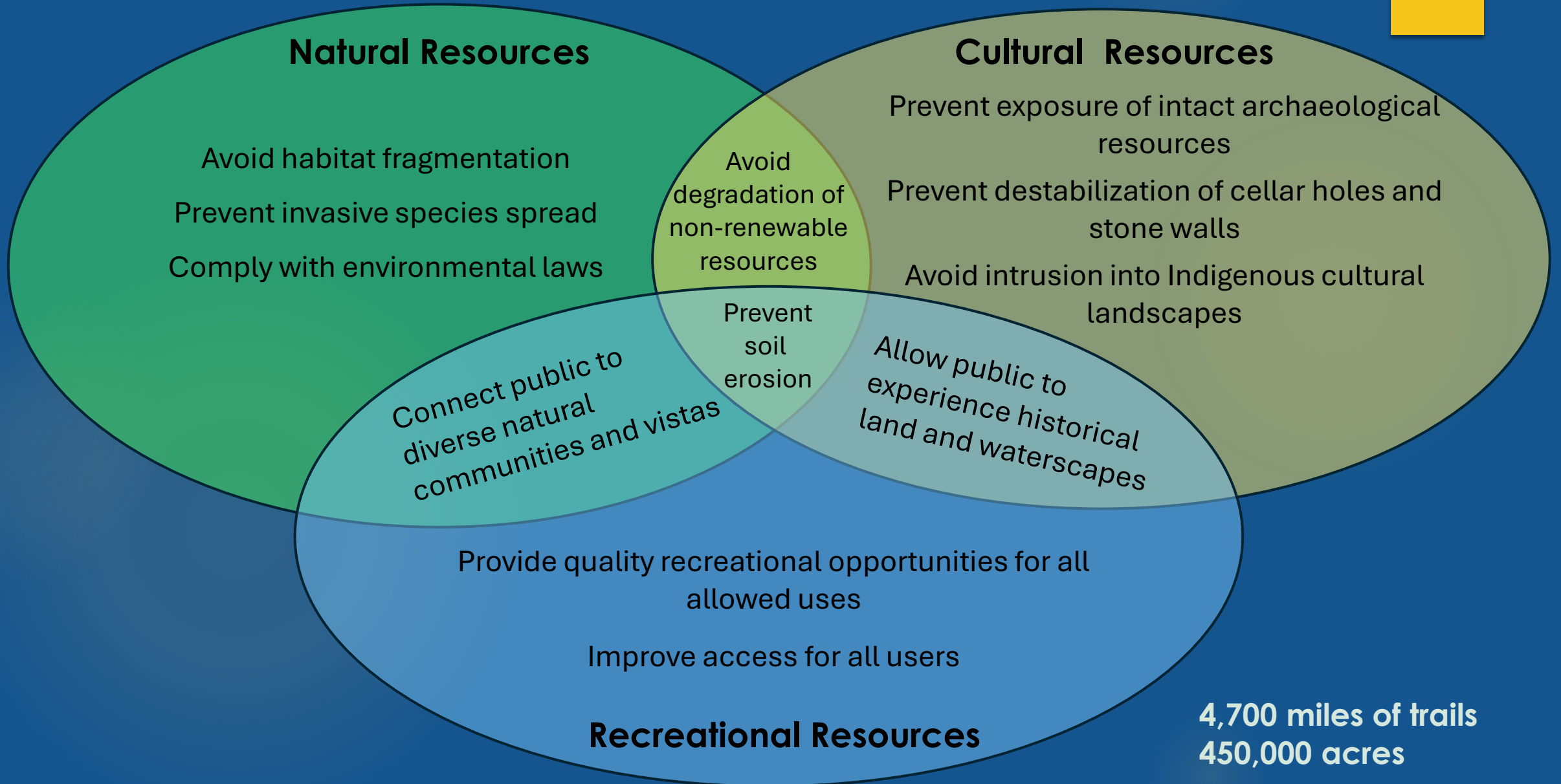
▶ Identify Constraints, Issues and Problem Areas

- ▶ 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 environment.
 - ▶ Be maintainable.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Lowell/Great Brook Planning Unit

Including Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest, Lowell Heritage State Park, Great Brook Farm State Park, Carlisle State Forest, Warren H. Manning State Forest, Billerica State Forest, and Governor Thomas Dudley State Park



October 2014

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



March 2012

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Trails Guidelines and Best Practices Manual



The Metacomb-Monadnock trail in 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

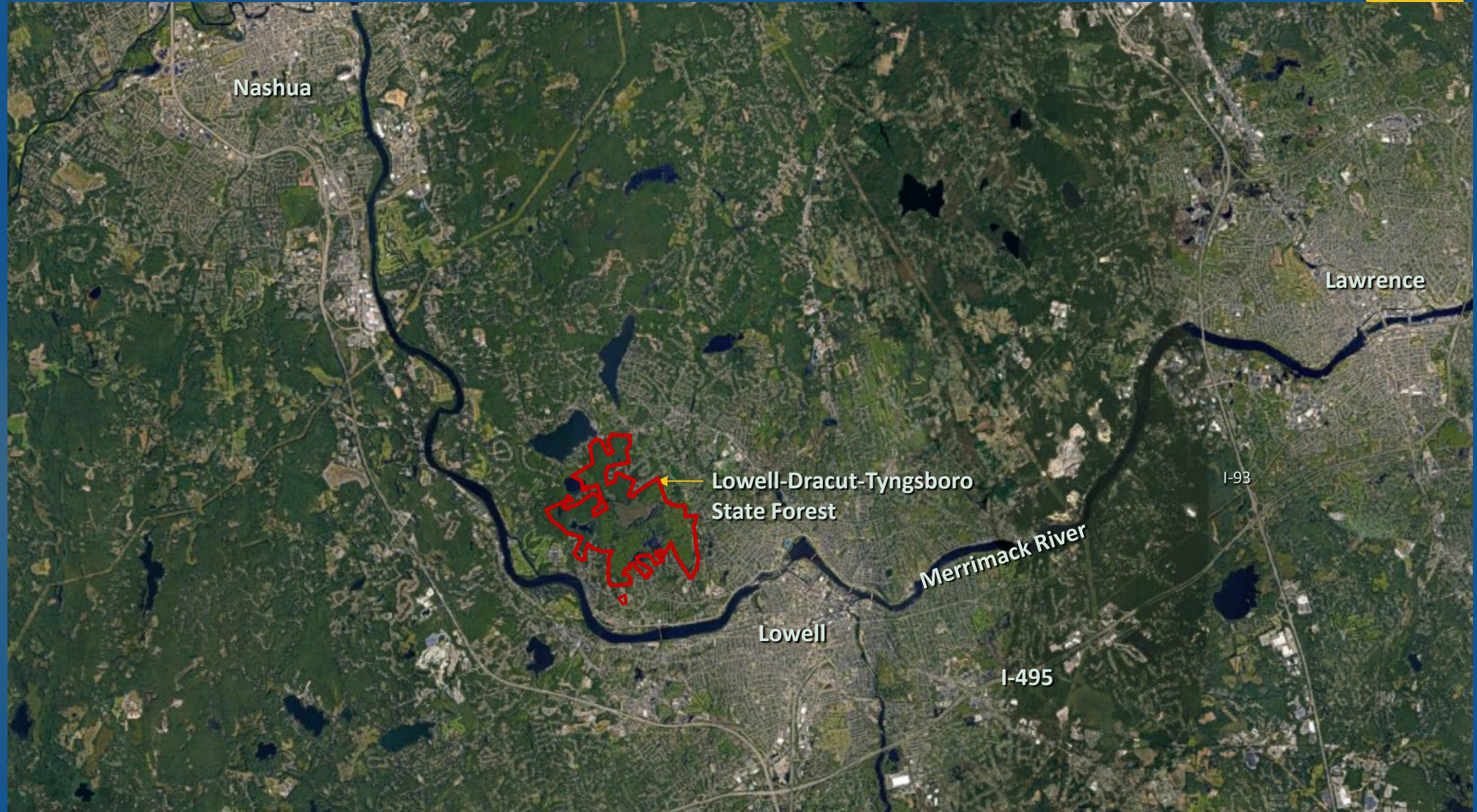
Updated July 2019

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.



Existing Conditions - Location

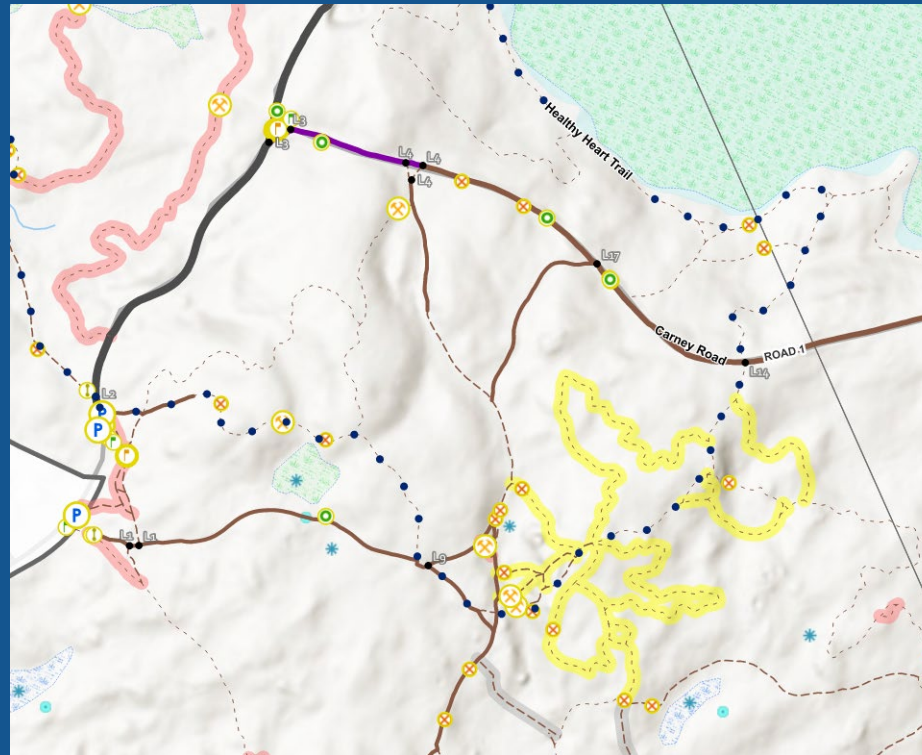


Existing Conditions Site Inventory

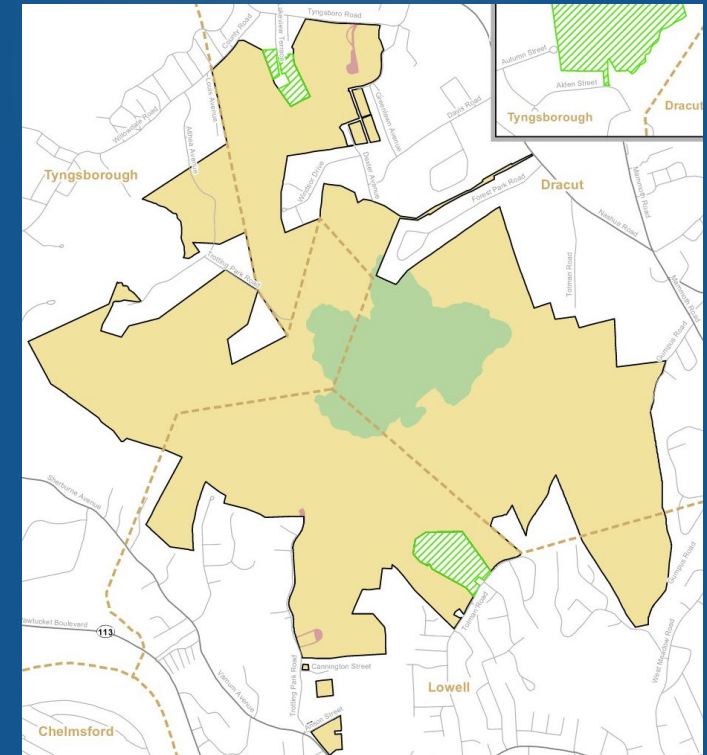
- 31 miles of Trails- Authorized & Unauthorized



Existing DCR Map (Inaccurate)



Data Collection Sample



Majority of the site is designated Parkland
with Zone 1 & 2.

Authorized Trail Network (Existing DCR Map)

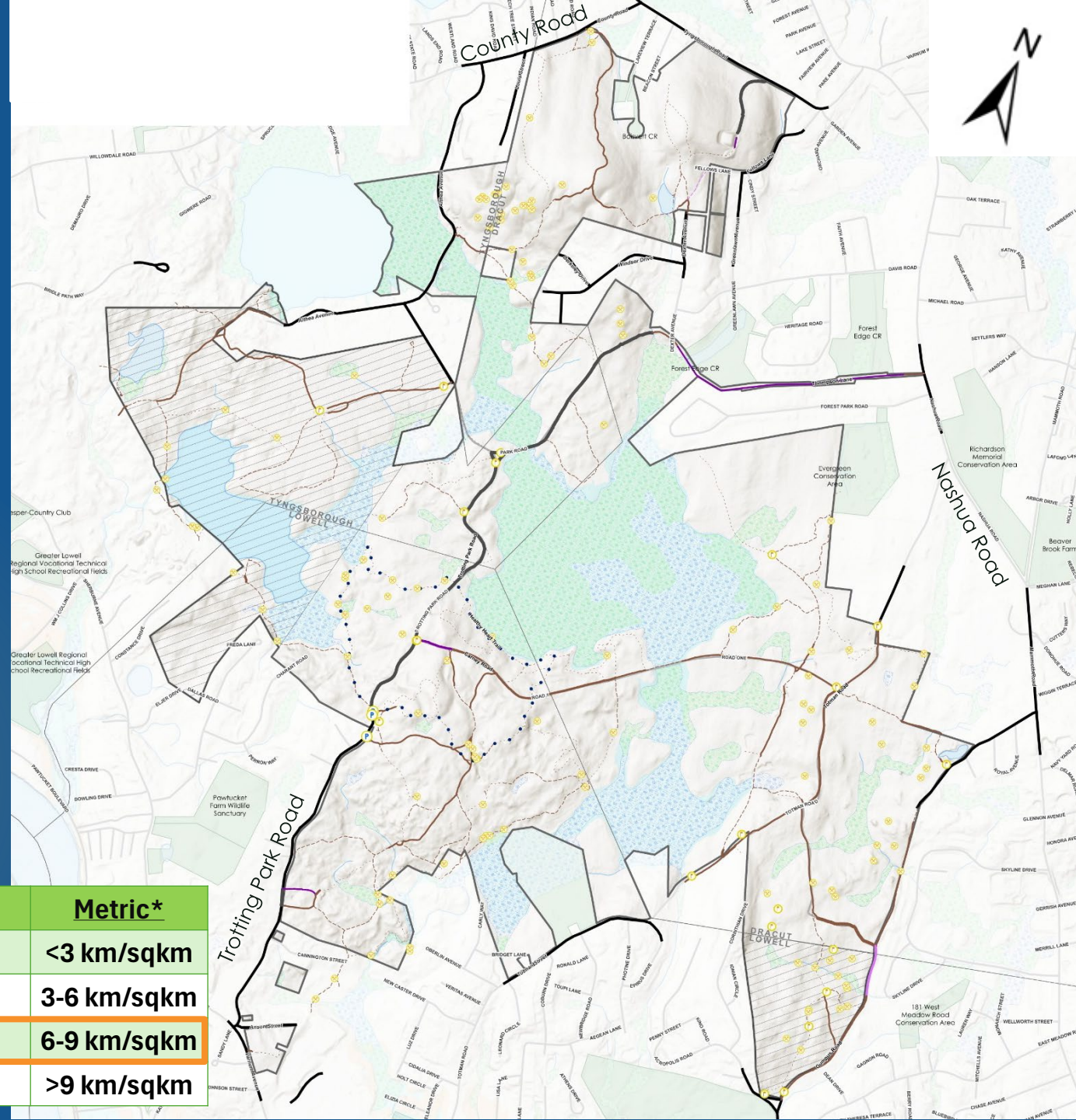
Park Uses:

- Hiking
- Running
- Biking
- Dog walking
- Nature observation
- Snow shoeing
- Cross Country Skiing
- Hunting
- Snowmobiles

24.9 miles of Trails (Authorized)

- 40.1 km
- 8.9 km/sqkm density

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



Legend

Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest Boundary

Municipalities

MassDOT Roads

Public Road

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'

Healthy Heart Trail

Trail Points

Parking Area

Trail Sign(s)/Kiosk

Trail Structure/Erosion Control

Resources

Protected and Recreational Open Space

No Hunt Area

DEP Wetlands Linear Features

Shoreline

Hydrologic Connection

Wetland Limit

DEP Wetland Areas

Marsh/Bog

Wooded marsh

Open Water

FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer

1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

Regulatory Floodway

0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

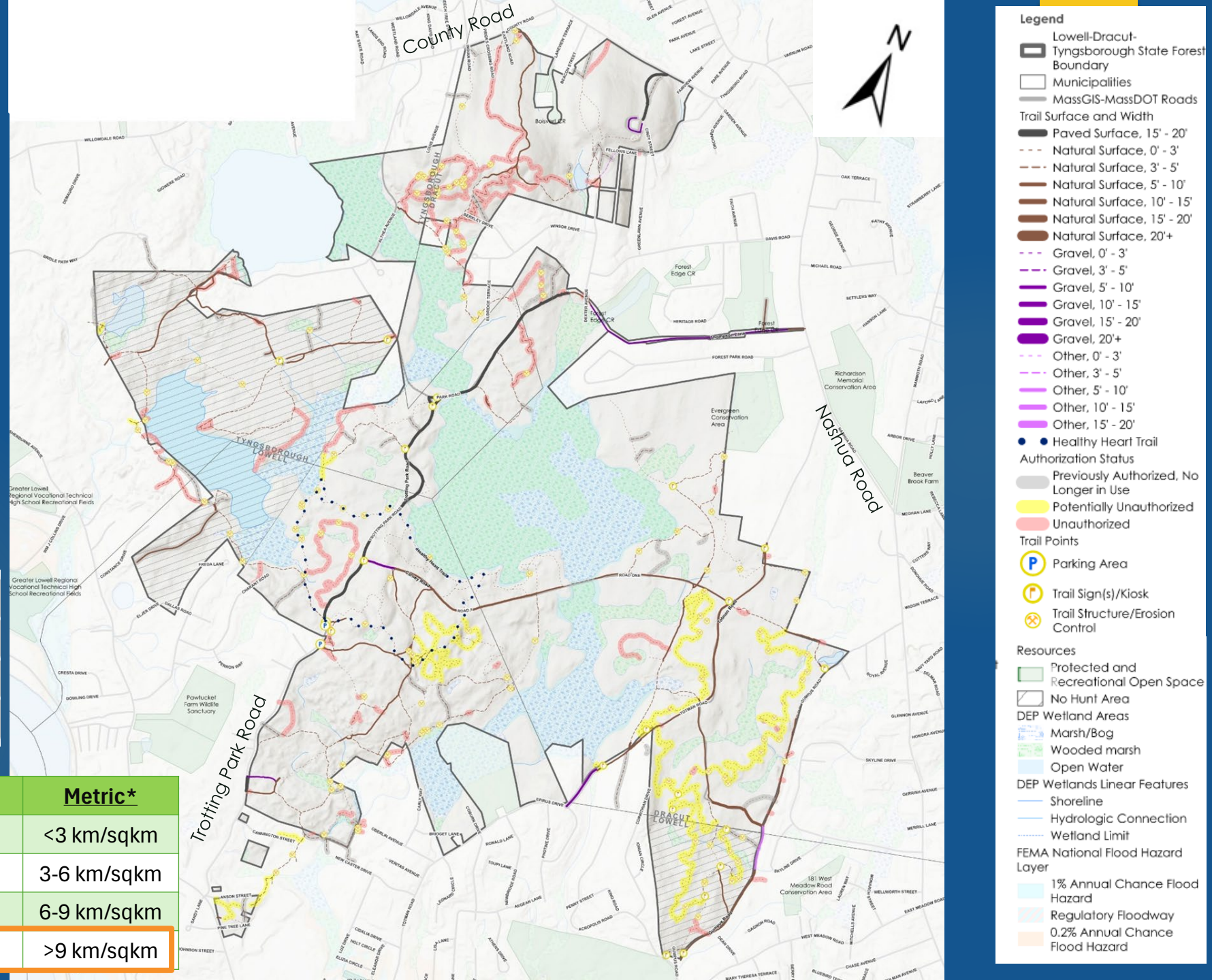
Authorized & Unauthorized Trail Network

31.0 miles of Trails
(Authorized & Unauthorized)

- 49.9 km
- 11.1 km/sqkm density

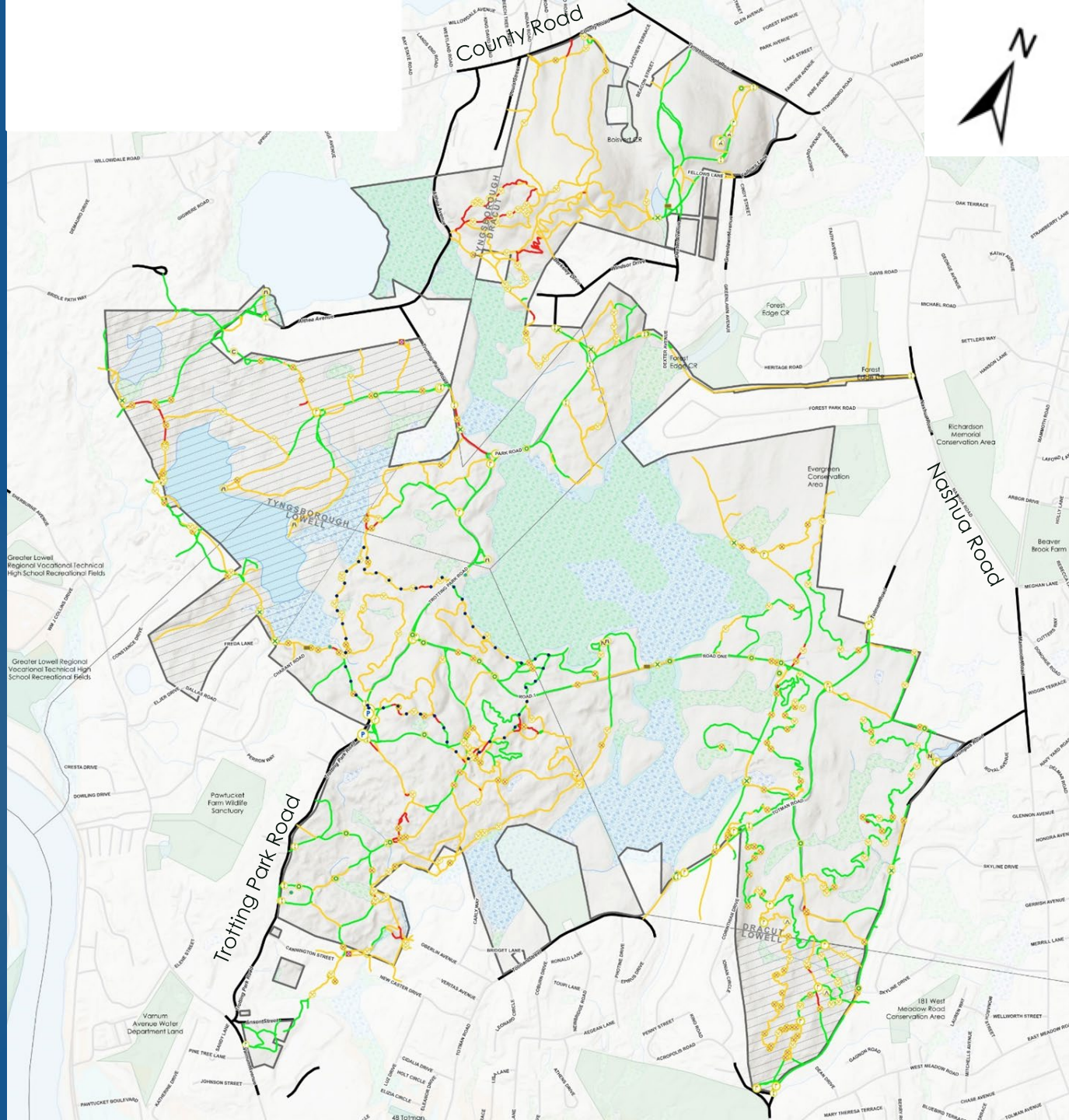
	Mileage
Total Trails Mapped	31.0
Authorized	24.9 (80%)
Unauthorized	6.1 (20%)

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



Trail Conditions

Trail Conditions	Mileage
Good	14.4 (46%)
Fair	14.9 (48%)
Poor	1.7 (6%)



Legend

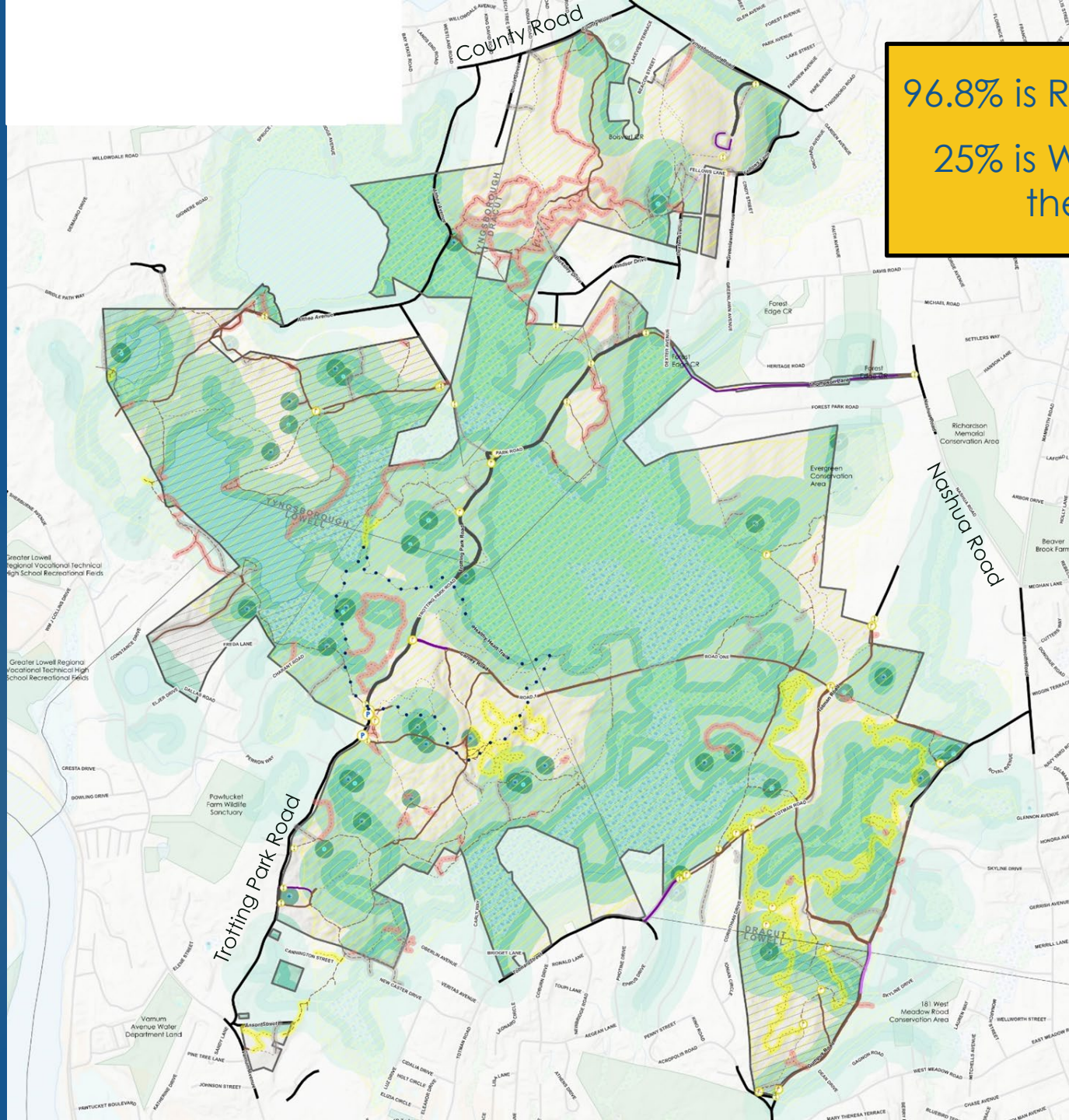
- Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest Boundary
- Municipalities
- MassGIS-MassDOT Roads
- Trail Condition
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
- Healthy Heart Trail
- Trail Points
 - Parking Area
 - Gate
 - Bench(es)
 - Building
 - Campsite
 - Historic/Cultural Site
 - Noteworthy Natural Feature
 - Vista
 - Trail Sign(s)/Kiosk
 - Trail Structure/Erosion Control
 - Road Culvert
 - Road Ford
 - Road Sign
 - Water Hole
 - Encroachment Issue
 - Trail Damage

Natural Resources



For more information on how trails impact wildlife, visit:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a205281cfc004dfc80055503c9c8befe>

Habitat Areas	Acres
Total Area	1116.3
Wetlands Area	279.45 (25%)
Wetlands Area including 100ft Buffer	496 (44%)
	Miles
Trail miles within 100ft Buffer	6.85 (22%)



96.8% is Rare Species Habitat
25% is Wetlands (44% with the 100' buffer)

Resources

- Protected and Recreational Open Space
- No Hunt Area
- NHPSP Priority Habitat
- NHPSP Certified Vernal Pools
- NHPSP Potential Vernal Pools
- DEP Wetland 100m Buffer
- DEP Wetlands 100ft Buffer
- Vernal Pool 100ft Buffer
- DEP Wetlands Linear Features
- Shoreline
- Hydrologic Connection
- Wetland Limit
- DEP Wetland Areas
- Marsh/Bog
- Wooded marsh
- Open Water
- FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- Regulatory Floodway
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard

Sensitive Resource Areas



- ▶ 39 inventoried, field-verified, and documented historic and archaeological resources
 - ▶ Recorded Pre-contact Sites
 - ▶ Inventory and field review by Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL)
 - ▶ Most of the upland area designated as archeologically significant lands

Stone slab bridge

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.

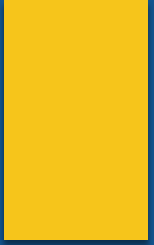
Public Survey Results To-Date

- ▶ 144 responses (from April to October 20th)
- ▶ 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



The trail system offers sufficient resting areas (benches, logs, etc.)



The trail system is confusing



There are too many trails



The trail system offers a variety of recreational opportunities



The trail marking system (blazes/intersection markers/directional signs) is easy to follow



The trail surfaces are dry and without mud holes



The trail surfaces are not eroded



The trails are generally free of vegetation and not overgrown

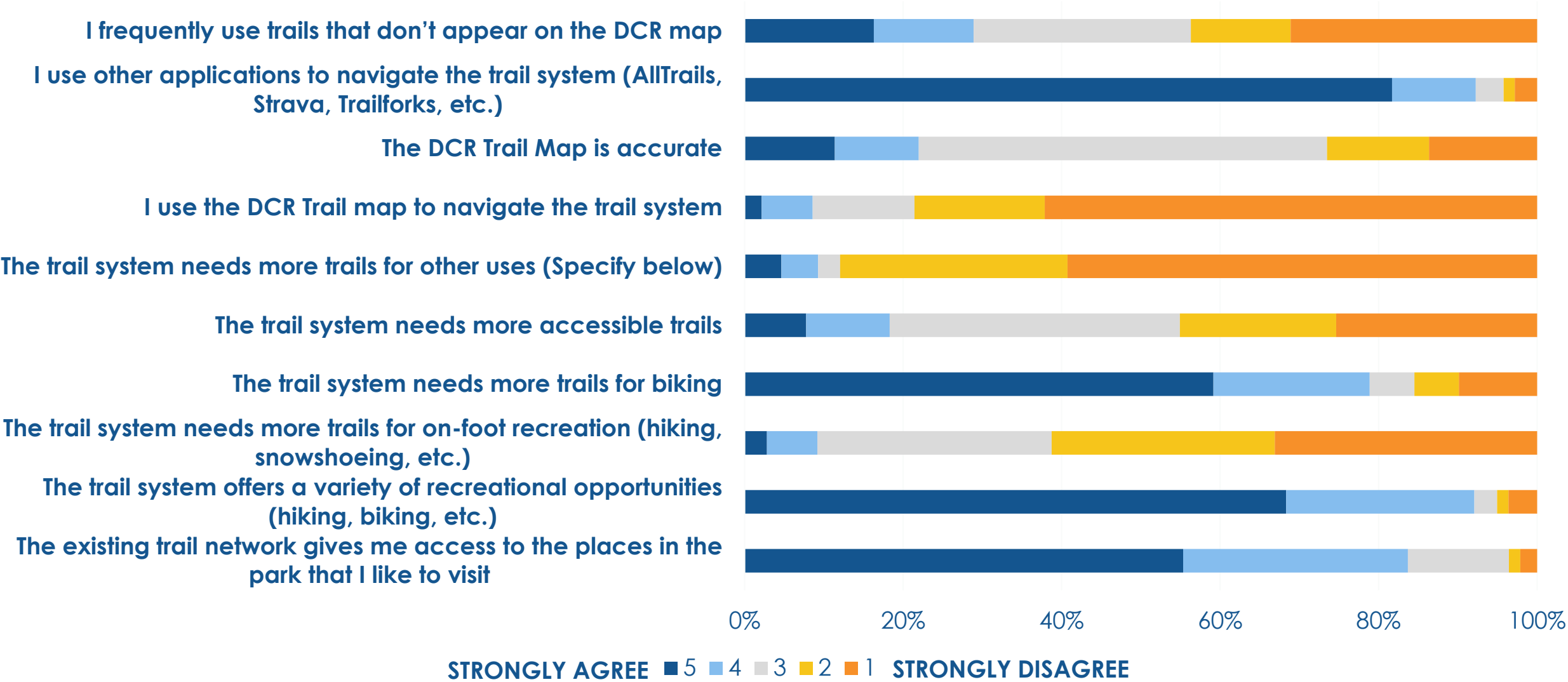


0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

STRONGLY AGREE 5 4 3 2 1 STRONGLY DISAGREE

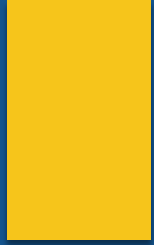
Public Survey Results To-Date

Site Access and Recreational Opportunities



Public Survey Results To-Date

Trail Use Motivation



Public Comment

Discussion



- ▶ 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 state forest's trails?
- ▶ Any other information about this state forest'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: November 20, 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



Thank you!

